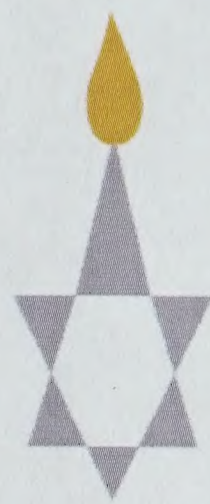


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**AN OPTIMIST  
WITHOUT HOPE**

**BY WILLIAM KAISER**







SECOND EDITION

AN OPTIMIST WITHOUT HOPE

BY WILLIAM KAISER

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An Optimist Without Hope

By William Kaiser

Preface One

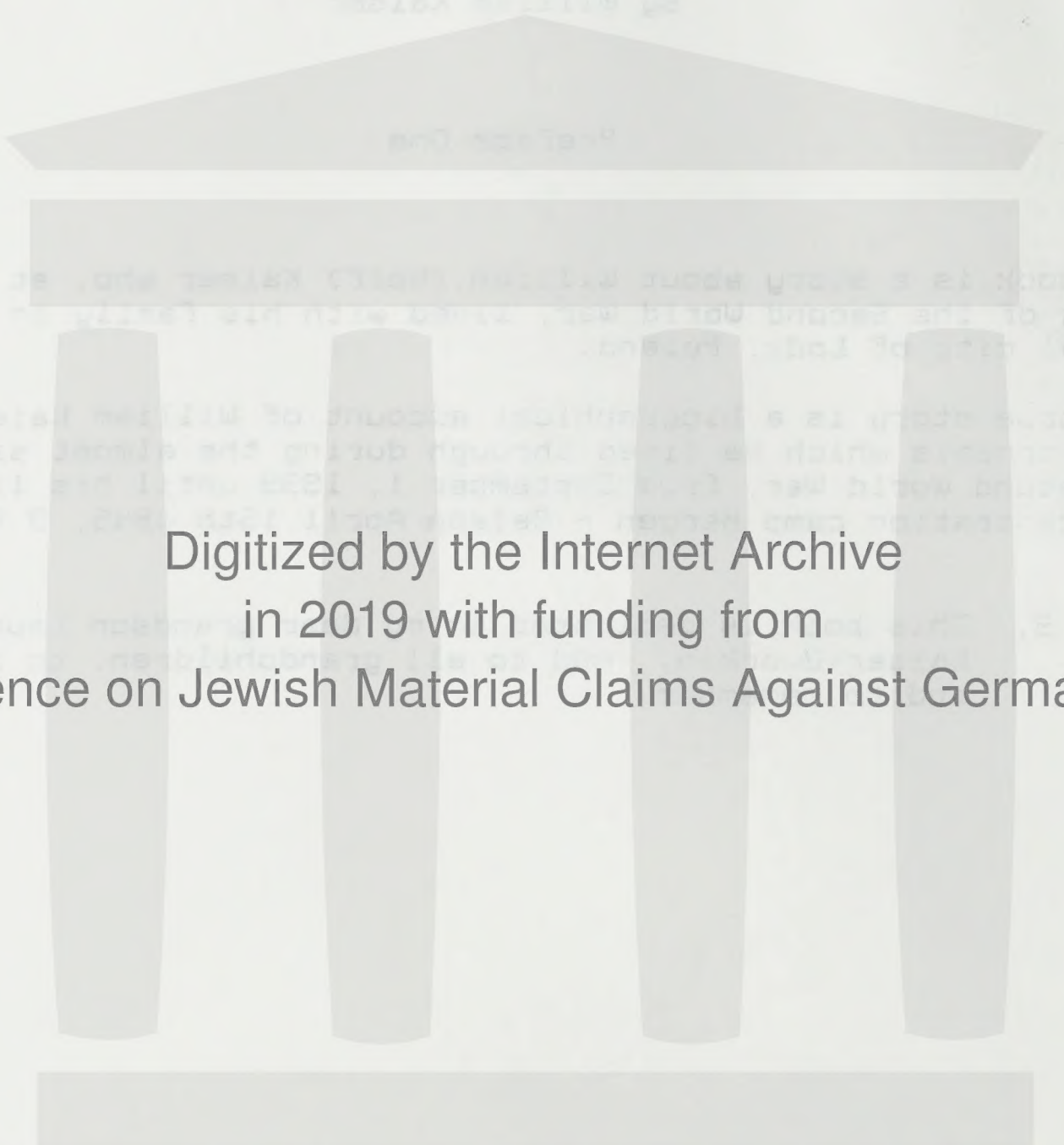
This book is a story about William (Wolf) Kaiser who, at the beginning of the Second World War, lived with his family in the industrial city of Lodz, Poland.

This true story is a biographical account of William Kaiser, his life and ordeals which he lived through during the almost six years of the Second World War, from September 1, 1939 until his liberation from concentration camp Bergen - Belsen April 15th 1945, 3 PM.

P.S. This book is dedicated to my dear grandson Laurence Kaiser-Dworkin. And to all grandchildren, to read, and to remember.

P.S. To know what happened  
read this book as if it were you





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# An Optimist Without Hope

## Preface Two

In a New York Times Book Review, the Reviewer observed that in the years 1980-81 a great deal had been written and shown on television about the Second World War. Particularly the Reviewer mentioned about the genocide of the European Jewry.

In addition to the T V show The Holocaust, and the story about Fannie Fanelon, many other similar programs were produced. The Reviewer complained that so far no eyewitness had come forward to tell his or her experience of that time. William Kaiser was an eyewitness, and was lucky to survive. He decided to do just that, tell it as it was to him.

The thought of writing about his experiences of those years was formidable to Bill Kaiser, because he is not a writer, and does not know how to write a book. It will require tremendous concentration and discipline to recollect all those daily happenings of forty five years ago.







## Preface Two

That William (Wolf) Kaiser survived those six years of the most tragic Jewish ordeal was not because he was some kind of a hero, or because he was smarter than the others under the same conditions, it was just luck.

The real heroes of that time were the six million European Jews who died for no other reason than being born Jewish. The circumstances of their death had never before occurred in the history of mankind.

That bloody period has been documented in thousands of records, in books and films. Its history can be found in Government archives and libraries all over the world. Their authenticity cannot be denied.

Some of the literature from that period has been written by professionals who gathered information, information through research.

Many books were written in the form of novels, adding romance to satisfy the readers taste, and to make profit. Among the unfortunate there might have been romance and sex, but for the history that is of no importance.

The television documentary The Holocaust which was shown all over the world, and seen by millions, did not mirror exactly what happened.

There were officially no schools in the Ghettos. Education was verboten. But in secret, and in hiding, small groups of children obtained some education.

Certainly, they were not taught French. Jewish children of that time did not need to know French to die in the crematories.

P.S. Many thanks to my dear daughter Denise Adele Kaiser Ph.D. for her support and technical help in writing this story.







## Europe: Summer 1939

### Chapter I

Dark clouds were gathering over the horizon. Europe is frightened over what might happen to it. The fear of war was with all the nations of Europe, yet no one knows how to prevent it.

The people of Germany, over sixty million strong, with one voice were screaming "Heil Hitler, Heil Hitler". The Heil Hitler was like thunder in the ears of the peoples of Europe. "Deutschland ueber alles" Germany above everything, was the slogan. Behind that slogan was the feeling of superiority, and selfishness was among the Germans.

Never before in the history of nations were a people so united behind one leader, as in that time in Germany. A slogan popular in Germany at the time put it concisely, "Ein Volk, Ein Fuehrer" One Nation, One Leader.

Some Europeans tried to reason, and to appease the Germans, by responding to their demands of territory, hoping to prevent a cataclysm. The Rheinland, the Sudetenland and Memelland was given to them, but it did not satisfy. They needed more Lebensraum. They always had more demands, backed by ultimatums.

No, the Germans did not want war. Not so long as they got what they were asking for. As stated in one of their songs "Heute Europa, morgen die welt" Today Europe, tommorow the world.





Yes, it seemed very much that all Germans were united behind the Fuehrer. Whatever became of the many opposition parties of the Weimar Republic? They also had another demand to the world. They wanted back their former African colonies. They needed more Lebensraum. There was not enough living space for all the Germans in Germany.

One problem on which Europe was almost united was the question of the Jews.

Antisemitism at that time existed in all the countries of Europe, including the democratic France and England. In Eastern Europe the feeling toward Jews was at a pogrom mentality. Often the Jews in Poland were told by their gentile neighbors, "just wait. Hitler will get you, and that will be the end of you". How right they were.

In Europe, at that time Jewish life and security mostly depended on the Government and leaders of particular nation. As an example, under the leadership of Marshal Pilsudski of Poland and President Masarik of Czechoslovakia the Jews in those countries enjoyed relative freedom and equality.

Until the Nazi period, the Jews in the world had rather a friendly feeling toward Germans. There was the notion that the Germans are a cultured and humanistic people. Besides, if you spoke Yiddish you could almost speak German. There was among the Jews the feeling that in the event of German occupation of a foreign country, they would appreciate the Jews because the Jews would be able to converse with them. But, the world is not ruled by logic.

The Nazi destruction of European Jewry, and the approval of it by others, is a tragedy which lies on the conscience of many and should never be forgiven, or forgotten.





## Chapter II

Lodz, Poland August 1939

The city of Lodz was the second largest city in Poland, with a population of about 750,000. Among them were about 400,000 Poles, 220,000 Jews, and 100,000 of German origin, and a few lesser groups. Lodz was famous for its textile and textile related industries. Among them were spinning mills, clothing factories and stocking factories and shops.

In general, there was great poverty among the working population, including the Jews. The almost anti Jewish pogrom feelings of the Poles made life for the Jews in Poland much harder.

The opportunities for a Jewish worker were very limited. A Jew could not be employed in the larger factories, because as a Jew he would not be accepted in the union. A Jew could not become a policeman, a janitor, nor a street cleaner, for the same reason. Jews were mostly employed by Jews, in small factories or shops.

In higher education there was a so called (Numerus Clausus) or a quota for Jews. Usually, if somebody could afford higher education, they had to go to other countries for studies. For Jews, there was no future in Poland. Some tried to emigrate, but that was not easy, because most countries in Europe and America had strict emigration laws. Especially for emigrants from Eastern Europe.





Wolf Kaiser, the son of Solomon Noah and Adele Kaiser was twenty years old, 5.10 inches tall. He was the youngest of nine children, five sons and four daughters. Two sisters and two brothers were already married, and had among them nine grandchildren. They all lived in the city of Lodz, Poland at Pomorska street No. 20, two houses from the City Council, and one building from the Jewish Community building.

They owned a small stocking factory, adjoining the living quarters, producing mostly socks for men. Brother Issac, who learned and became very skilled at the trade, was in charge of the whole enterprise. All together eight people were employed in the factory. Five sisters andd brothers, and three employees.

At the time of general mobilization of all eligible men into the Polish Army, neither Wolf nor any of his brothers were called, although they all were of military age. But all of them were called into the civil defense, to be alert for spies, and to make sure that the houses were darkened at night. The civil guards walked the streets, kept order, and talked to the soldiers who were temporarily located at the next buildings of the City Council, and the Jewish Community.

The soldiers were still in their civilian clothing, because there were not enough uniforms for all the mobilized men. Only an arm band recognised them as soldiers. They were hanging around in the buildings and street waiting to be sent to the front lines, and fight for the country. Poles in general love their country, and are very patriotic people, they are always ready to fight, to defend, and if need, to die for their country.





## Chapter III

### Beginning of Second World War.

September 1, 1939. The German Army with all its might crossed the border into Poland. The Polish propaganda claimed victories, pushing the Germans out of Poland, and winning on all fronts. The radio was blaring martial music 24 hours a day. Unfortunately, it was the beginning of a period of endless suffering and destruction in Europe, climaxing with the genocide of a third of all Jews in the world.

The people of Poland did not know the truth about the war. The Government did not reveal that the army was not able to defend the country. They did not broadcast that the German army had broken through all the Polish lines.

There was no fighting in or around the city of Lodz. Occasionally the soldiers and civil defense spotted spies who presumably from the roof tops were signaling to German fighter planes. Some of those spies were captured, beaten, and taken away. That gave the patriots a feeling that they accomplished something for the country. According to the news, Poland was still repulsing the Germans, and is victorious on all fronts.

Tuesday, September 5th, the fifth day of the war. That night Wolf was on civil guard duty. He noticed that the soldiers stationed next door were gone, nobody had seen them leave, but the buildings were empty. There was a frightening feeling. No protection, no soldiers, no police. Nobody to keep order or defend the city.





The news that the military had left, and the city is open for the victor to be taken spread through the city. People a mass came out into the streets. Nobody knew what to make of it. The city was open to the enemy, after all the assurances how victorious the Polish Army was. People clung to the radios for news.

After hours of waiting, General Rydz-Szmigly, the Minister of Defense came on the radio with an order to all the male population of Poland. Every Polish man was now a soldier of the Polish Army. They were all ordered to come to Warsaw, the capital. Any man who did not obey the order would be considered a war deserter, and the punishment would be death.

Most men obeyed the Government order. Tens of thousands, some with their wives and children, headed for Warsaw as ordered.

The weather was still quite warm. Transportation, except for horse and buggy, was not existent. The people, mostly walking to Warsaw carried with them the best and most valuable things they possessed. Some wore fur coats, carried heavy suitcases, and had knapsacks on their backs.

There was no authority or force to make them go, but as good citizens and patriots they obeyed the order. The Jews of Poland were no exception. With tears in their eyes people said good bye to loved ones and friends. There was a feeling that they might not see each other again.

Wolf, his four brothers and two brothers-in-law, like all men were supposed to follow orders and report to the military in Warsaw. But would it make sense to obey such an order? Half of Polands population might wind up in Warsaw. For the hundreds of thousand of people heading for Warsaw there would not be enough accomodations, nor food or water.

Wolf's family decided not to leave their home. They would stay in Lodz and see what will happen.





If the Germans had already occupied Poland, then it was just a matter of time when Warsaw too would fall. Going to Warsaw would accomplish nothing. It would only result in hardship.

As for the people who were heading for Warsaw, the situation as predicted was a precarious one. The roads were clogged, food and water was difficult to obtain, they paid for food and water with golden rings, bracelets and even diamonds.

Because of the still warm weather, people shed some of their fine clothing and left them on the road. Peasants, from the villages around, followed them picking up everything that people discarded.

Meanwhile, the German fighter planes were diving down on the roads, machine gunning helpless marchers, killing and wounding thousands. The roads all over Poland were littered with dead and wounded. For those who reached Warsaw the situation was not any better. The city was overcrowded, and as predicted, there was no housing, food nor water for such a huge influx of people.

People were scattered everywhere, in parks, hallways, and behind walls. At the same time, the German army surrounded Warsaw from all sides, bombarding it 24 hours a day without cessation.

The remainder of the Polish Government decided to defend the city to the last Pole. Warsaw was under German siege for a full month, the bombardment never stopped, thousands of corpses lay in the streets. The wounded received no medical aid, there was no medicine nor bandages to heal their wounds. The city of Warsaw was being destroyed street by street, house by house.

The fires of burning houses could not be extinguished because of a shortage of water.

After a month of heroic resistance by the Poles, Warsaw surrendered to the German might. It was the end of a free Poland and the beginning of Nazi German occupation for almost six years.





## Chapter IV

### Lodz Under German Occupation

After the August 1939 agreement between Hitler and Stalin to divide between them Poland, Russia occupied the eastern part of the country, about a third of Poland.

After the Germans invaded Poland there was great hope that a turn for the better was coming.

England and France declared war on Germany. There was no doubt that the combined power of those two great empires would defeat the Nazis. But the expectation was not fulfilled. Within less than a year the Germans, with a few exceptions, occupied one country after another. By the middle of summer 1940 all of Western Europe fell to them. The non occupied countries were under tremendous pressure and force to cooperate with them.

A tremendous darkness and hopelessness came over the peoples of Europe. Suppression, cold and hunger was the daily routine. The pessimistic conviction was that there was no power left which could defy the might of the Germans.

In Wolf's home some tried to be optimistic, regardless of the daily happenings. The older ones remembered and often mentioned the gentlemen German behavior from during the First World War. There was nothing but praise for the Germans. The more realistic opinion believed that Germany of the day, was not the Germany of the Kaiser. Nazi terror did not exist during the First World War.





The only hope was based on the premise that once the British and France started an offensive against the Germans, they would surely push them back from the lands they had occupied. Besides, the belief was that the Germans could never cross into France through the Maginot line which was the strongest iron and steel fortification all across the French German border.

The Germans did not march into France through the Maginot line. They went around it, through Belgium.

September 4, 1939. In the city of Lodz there was a tension and anticipation, but no sign yet of the Germans. Only German civil guards organized by the local Germans appeared. They just kept order in the streets. Nobody designated them to do it, but there was not other authority, so everyone obeyed them.

The guards behaved almost nicely toward the people, including the Jews. They were highly disciplined. Nobody asked, or knew to whom they were accounting to. The presumption was that it must be Berlin. There was no looting nor any other criminality in the city. The city was waiting for the occupiers, and still they did not appear.

Friday, September 8, 1939. It seemed that the Nazis started everything on Fridays. In the afternoon Wolf stood in line for bread of Mr. Cwilich's bakery, who because of Mr. Cwilich and Wolf's brother-in-law, David M. Bigeleisen, the bakery owner sold them more bread than the status allowed. Suddenly, as if from nowhere, hundreds of motorcycles with side cars holding German helmeted soldiers came running down the streets at tremendous speed. They were armed with machine guns with which they threatened the people who were looking at them with almost amazement and some kind of relief and hope that somehow life would become normal again.





Not long after, tanks and trucks with soldiers followed them. People came out of their houses and looked on in silence, and mixed feelings, assuring each other that there was no reason to worry, after all, these were the Germans, the most industrialised and cultured people of Europe. There might be hardships, shortages of food and clothing, and perhaps a little cold in the winter, but in time of war this was to be expected. In war it was always like that, otherwise, nothing to fear. The Jews of Lodz were not rich. They only talked about politics, but were not involved. All they had to do now, was to survive until the war was over.

Saturday, the second day of German occupation, Jews like on any Saturday, went to temple. The city was not so peaceful anymore. The roar of Jude (Jew) was all over the city. The Germans grabbed Jews off the streets for work, beating and intimidating them.

Jewish beards were cut off with knives, sometimes into the flesh, bleeding Jews were seen everywhere. Men and women vanished from the streets, and their families did not know where they were taken to. Some never returned. The Germans did not recognize Jews as such, so they asked (bist du Jude) are you Jewish? They knew that a Jew understood German. If people pretended not to understand they would let them go, meaning he or she was not Jewish. The Germans were looking for Jews only. Soon other Poles volunteered to help the Germans pointing and saying (Ja Jude) yes he is a Jew. Then came the punishment. Those pointed out had deceived the Germans. If the Jew survived the punishment he was lucky.

On that Saturday, Wolf's father also went to temple. Usually by noon the service was over and he came home for his meal. This time he did not return at his usual time, and the family was worried and scared. Not until evening did he return. His clothes were torn, and he was bleeding all over. Father and many others like him were the first victims of the German occupation.



## Chapter U

Winter 1939 - 40

Not long after the Germans took over Poland Polish Pomerania, Silesia up to the city of Lodz was incorporated into the Reich. They changed the name of the city from Lodz to Litzmannstadt, in honor of a German General of the First World War, who was then Governor of the city.

The winter of 1939 - 1940 was very cold. For the population there was no wood nor coal to heat the home, so people broke up their furniture to use for fuel. Food was rationed, and little. People stood in lines for hours to buy something to eat. Life became very hard. The only hope was that the war would not last long.

Brother Izaak who was the sixth child in the family, was the one who revived the family economically. As a young man he had learned the trade o manufacturing stockings. As soon as he knew the trade well, he borrowed money and went into manufacturing socks for men on his own.

The factory employed, including himself, five of the unmarried sisters and brothers. And in addition, three outsiders were employed. Also, mother helped, doing whatever she cold. The factory used eight knitting machines, a 12 spindle machine and various hand machines. Every worker labored 12 hours daily.

Izaak not only managed the factory, but also was a good mechanic, he repaired the machines. He also filled in for any absent worker, so that no machine would stand idle.





Under the occupation Jewish concerns and factories were confiscated and expropriated by the Reich, unless it worked and served the Germans, and was overseen by a German commissar. Izaak found such a German Commissar, who became the overall boss over the factory. A certificate with a swastika was hung on the outside of the door stating that the factory was protected by the authority, and is working and producing for the Reich.

Although legally the factory was protected by the authority, it did not deter German soldiers, and others to come in and merchandise looting. The protesting, and explaining that it ~~belongs~~ to the Reich did not deter them from stealing. Also, when they needed workers they came in and took the people away from the machines, sometimes for days.

Everyday life for Jews became harder. New orders and restrictions mostly for Jews, made matters worse. Disobedience was always punishable by death. The latest order required that all Jews, young and old, must wear a yellow star of David sewn on the left side of the clothes on the front chest and back, clear and visible to all. Disobedience was punishable by death. From that time on there was no doubt who was Jewish. A Jew could be recognised a hundred feet away.

In the street one could often hear a German scream (Stehen Bleiben) which meant, everybody stand still, don't move. They then selected Jews only, either to work, or else to beat them up before the gentile onlookers, who joyously encouraged the Germans to continue beating the filthy Jews.

There was a feeling of sadness and desperation among the Jews. For Jews there was no legal human protection, nobody to turn to. Anybody who felt like it could beat a Jew, or even kill with immunity, they were free game.





The physical dangers to the Jews in their daily existence were terribly painful. People were forcibly dragged away and often never returned. They disappeared without a trace. If some actually returned, they were hurt bleeding, and had received broken bones in manhandling. Many were afraid to leave their houses. But that did not help much, since the Germans came into the houses and dragged them out.

The only hope of survival was to get to the only open border. The occupied Russian Zone, but that was easier said than done.

Occupied Poland was divided between the Germans and Russians, but, actually the plan was to divide Poland into three zones. The Eastern part was taken over by the USSR. The second part like Polish Silesia, Pomerania, as far up to Lodz, were outright annexed to the Reich. The third part, or the rest of German occupied Poland, was to be a Polish Country, with its own government in Warsaw, much like the later Vichy government in occupied France.

In Poland, however, the Germans had no luck in establishing a puppet regime. They could not find a single Pole who would cooperate with them. Out of 33 million Poles, not one became a Quisling of Poland.

Meanwhile, the Kaiser family factory was working, and compared to others, they were not too bad off. The German for whom they were working rewarded them not only with pay, but sometimes also with food. For them hunger was not yet a problem..

After work nobody dared to go out into the street. It was not safe. As a consequence, people from the same building visited each other, and became better aquan-ted. Not everyone in the building was actually a tenant. Some people moved in with relatives and friends, because they had been compelled to leave from their non Jewish neighborhoods. Some had come to the city from the surrounding towns and villages, they felt safer in a larger Jewish community.



In the same house where Wolf and family lived was a young couple named Katz. They had a three year old boy. Mr. Katz was blonde, about 5 feet 6 inches tall. Mrs. Katz was a brunette and shorter.

In the evenings when Wolf was not working, and was afraid to go into the street, he often visited them, spending many hours in pleasant conversation about the past and sharing hopes for the future. Most of the time the conclusions were very pessimistic.

One evening, spending hours together Mr. Katz confided to Wolf that they planned to go illegally to the Russian Zone. They could not stand the hardship and daily terror under the Germans anymore. True, life under the Russians may not be easy, but it will be safer. Over there, they would have a better chance to survive the war. Not too deep into Russia, just to sit it out until the war will be over, hopefully, it will be over soon. They were asking Wolf if he would like to go with them. They think that Wolf would be good company.

Between the Germans and the Russians there was an agreement that people from each others zone had the right to return home. Jews were included. There were many Poles as well as Jews who came from those areas and got stuck in strange cities, and now gladly took advantage of the agreement of going home. That also gave many who did not belong to the Russian Zone the opportunity to escape from the Germans.

The Katzes persuaded Wolf to join with them in escaping to Russia for what they thought would be the short duration of the war. Wolf wanted his family to leave the Germans. After all, many other families had quietly picked themselves up and disappeared. Still, it was not an easy undertaking, especially for the older parents, and the small grandchildren. The cold weather, lots of walking, and perhaps running with heavy loads of bare necessities to venture into the unknown. To filter through the German lines, into Russia was a perilous undertaking. It would be hard and very dangerous.





Under the German occupation it was verboten for a Jew to use the railroad. It was not legal for a Jew to be on a train, only by special permission. Only for special duty for the Germans did a Jew receive permission. It was obvious to the Germans that a Jew going to the Russian border was attempting to flee because he was a Communist. Still, regardless of all the risks, the Katzes and Wolf went on planning their departure.

Good shoes, warm clothes and lots of money were needed. It was also important to dress in a way to look gentile, not recognizably Jewish. Towards the middle of October they were ready to depart. None of Wolf's family accompanied him. There was a little skepticism in the families behavior, as though in such a time Wolf was thinking more of himself than of the whole family.

When the day of departure arrived, the Katz family and Wolf were ready to say goodbye. They knew that they were going into the unknown. In their hearts they had many doubts if they were doing the right thing. Sometimes Wolf felt like abandoning the whole idea, but then, this impossible existence drove him to go.

With tears in everybodys eyes, and kisses from everyone Wolf for the first time in his life, left home. Not knowing if he would ever see his loved ones again.





## Chapter VI

### Going To The Russian Zone Of Occupied Poland

In the town of Podwoloczysk, which before the war used to be the border between the USSR and Poland, the river Woloczysk was the natural divider between the two countries.

In that town Wolf had had an uncle with family living a long time before the war. Actually, it was a sister of Wolf's mother who married was married to Mr. Ela Stroweis and together had six children. Five girls and one boy. The son, and one girl already emigrated to Palestine. After the Germans and Russians occupied Poland, the Russian border was moved west about 1000 km.

Wolf was seriously contemplating that once he would reach the Russian Zone he will go as far as to the Uncle in Podwoloczysk, where he might settle. At least he would have somebody to turn to in case of need. But first, the nearest border with the Russians was the city of Bialystok where they will have to aim. Once in Bialystok, Wolf could travel to Podwoloczysk.

Bialystok was Northeast from Lodz, about half the distance to Podwoloczysk. After long consideration with the family Katz it was decided that they would attempt to reach Bialystok.

To travel to Bialystok one had to go to Warsaw first, in Warsaw change trains east, towards the town of Malkin. Immediately outside Malkin a No Mans Land between the Germans and Russians was established, a neutral zone between the two countries. The so called No Mans Land was about 5 km deep, free of any occupation.



With knapsacks on their backs, bundles in their hands, and little money in their pockets, the three Katzes and Wolf departed. At the Kaliska railroad station in Lodz they bought two tickets each, one ticket from Lodz to Warsaw, and the other ticket was destination Malkin, to the border with Malkin. This was a precaution not immediately to show their complete destination. Once in Warsaw the safety situation would have to be re-evaluated.

Inevitably, in time of war transportation is not normal. There was no railroad schedule. Masses of people crowded the railroad terminals waiting for trains which usually arrived many hours late. The Jewish illegal passengers were not waiting in the terminals. They were afraid of the German gendarmes who persistently harrassed the Jews, asking for identification and travel permit papers. It was better for Jews not to be noticed. They hid in dark places unnoticed waiting for the train.

At the station there were many other Jewish travelers like Wolf and his companions. They looked at one another knowing well the reason for their being at the station.

After they had waited for many hours their train finally arrived. It was a long train puffing and spitting steam, already full with people. German gendarmes with shepherd dogs, and Polish police were watching the station, sizing up the passengers.

The Jewish passengers in hiding waited until the train was ready to depart. At the last conductors whistle for the train to move Wolf and his friends jumped on. They had to force themselves in. The train was packed with people, so it was almost impossible to board. Almost immediately the train and Wolf with his friends in it pulled out of the station.

Wolf had mixed feelings. He was unsure of himself, wondering if what he was doing was the right thing. But it was too late to change his mind. Already he was on his way to Russia, like to another world.





The train was mostly filled with German soldiers, and Poles. The Jewish passengers tried to blend in with the others, not to be noticed. The Poles knew well which of the passengers were Jewish. They could smell a Jew out from a thousand others. The antisemitic remarks among them never stopped, insisting with joy that the Nazis would take care of the Jews.

The Polish militant behavior toward the Jews gave the impression that the Germans were their friends, and that only the Jews lost the war. But actually, the Poles knew better.

That the Germans would take care of the Jews did not bother them, that suited them fine. But they also knew that the Germans will eventually turn against them. As the then German governor of Poland Mr. Frank (after the war he was hanged in Poland) said in a speech before Germans "We, the Germans are the masters. The Poles will be our slaves. And the Jews, for them we have plans".

Before the war Warsaw, the capital of Poland had a population of about one million and two hundred fifty thousand, among them about four hundred thousand were Jews. Warsaw was an old and pleasant city. The river Vistula ran thru it. After the Germans occupied the city Warsaw was to a large degree destroyed. There was lots of rubble from the month long German bombardment, the homes which still stood were mostly damaged. The people who on order from the Polish Government came to defend the Capital, were still there. The population then had risen to more than double.

The travel to Warsaw took Wolf and his companions about five hours. In Warsaw they had to change trains which was to take them to the town of Malkin, the town bordering the Russian Zone.

They better not go into the station, since they already had bought another ticket for the balance of the trip. Again, a huge crowd of people waited for the train heading east. Many were returning to their homes. If they could prove that they belonged in the Russian Zone, even Jews had no problems.





After a very long wait, the train finally arrived. Thousand of people, some with children rustled into it, everybody loaded with suitcases, boxes and bundles. There was universal fear of being left behind.

Wolf and the Katzes managed to board the train. It was very crowded. People stood so close to each other that one could feel the breath of the other. They all looked weary. Some closed their eyes resting or pretending to sleep. In contrast, the people actually heading home were more cheerful, even singing, happy that they would soon be with their loved ones.

But on the faces of those who were running from the Germans into the uncertainty there was only sadness and worry.

There were some among the gentile passengers who had made the trip between the zones many times. They knew exactly what was happening in Malkin on the arrival, especially to the Jews without proper identification papers. These were Poles who made a business of smuggling people or merchandise from the German side, into the Russian Zone. Except for the Jews, under the Germans for the gentiles merchandise was still available, and possible to buy at regular prices. But not so in the Russian Zone. In the Russian Zone there was a shortage of almost everything, and prices were a hundred times higher. Some of those smugglers had double identity papers going from one zone like heading home, and coming from the same zone using the same pretense, while actually doing contraband.

There were always people who in troubled times knew how to take advantage of the situation.

The train rushed east thru the country side. All that could be seen from the windows were dirt roads, and houses with straw roofs. Night came. Inside the train there was no light. Some random light occasionally shone in from passing towns, and stations. Otherwise it was difficult for one person to see another. The train rushed east without making any stops, as it was in a hurry to dispose of its passengers.



As said, the town of Malkin was the last stop on the German occupied side of Poland. From there a five kilometer deep spread a neutral zone between the Germans and Russians.

In conversation, the gentile passengers told the Jews that the station Malkin was unsafe for them. When trains arrived at the station, the Gestapo German guards and police, picked the Jews out from the other passengers, beat them, robbed them of their possessions, and finally arrested them. For the Jews passing through the Malkin railroad station was like going through a ring of fire.

Inside the train, in the darkness someone whispered into Wolf's ear saying "I know you are going over to the Russians. For money, in Malkin I will help you reach the Russian Zone".

It was a Pole who for money offered to help reach the Russian Zone, without first falling into the Germans at the station. The same Pole offered the same deal to many others. He was out for money and he said so. Wolf, after consulting with his friends the Katzes agreed to the Pole's offer, although he reflected it could be a trick. The Pole, after taking the money, might disappear. Yet, they took the chance and gave him a deposit. Arranging to give the balance when they reached the No Mans Land, out of German reach.

The Pole agreed to the money arrangement. "Listen carefully" he said, "When the train arrives in the station there will be Gestapo and all kind of police waiting, some with dogs. They will mostly be after Jews, insulting, beating them and some will be taken away". The Pole then continued, "The moment the train comes to a halt and the doors open, jump off and immediately run across to the other side of the track. Keep on running for about 3 miles until you come to a grain silo. At the silo you can stop and relax. You will be in No Mans Land, out of the German reach, but not yet with the Russians. There you will be safe and there I will meet you".





It was almost midnight when the train finally arrived at the town of Malkin, yet the station was lit up almost like day light. The doors of the train were thrown open, screams like "Raus Raus Verfluchte Juden" Out out you damned Jews. There was hardly any time to look around yet Wolf saw Jews being beaten. Their cries and screams were heard for a long time while Wolf and many others ran to the other side of the track, as instructed by the Pole. They kept on running long after the light of the station vanished completely.

One can never forget the sight of hundreds of people running from one country into another, loaded with packs and some with children, running for their lives through empty farms and fields. There were no animals or people in sight. Almost like the land was free for the taking, yet it was not so. The so called No Mans Land was actually under close observation by both sides, the Germans and the Russians. Occasionally the sky was lit up by flares, and then was dark again. The silo as described by the Pole came into sight, everybody stopped finally to rest. It was safe. No Germans or Russians to be seen. People rested and were happy that the most dangerous part of the journey, the German side, was luckily past. Somehow, there was little fear of the Russians. The Pole, who had advised Wolf and his friends how to avoid the Germans at the station in Malkin, soon made his appearance, to collect the balance of the agreed money. For the first time Wolf could really see the man. He was tall and strong, dressed in a coat of some animal skin, and high boots. Looking at him we realized that actually we were not dressed or properly prepared for a winter journey into the unknown.

The Pole did not say how he crossed the border. He simply said "I instructed you how to avoid the German guards at the border, now pay me the rest of the money". The Katzes and Wolf paid the additional agreed money. The man took the money and disappeared. They never saw him again.





There must have been many hundreds of people in the Neutral Zone, all waiting for the right time to get into the Russian Zone. Their immediate aim was not to be spotted by the Russians who for sure were somewhere in the vicinity. Those with legal papers and could prove that they belonged to that region kept on going straight ahead. The majority, however, claimed to be political or Jewish refugees running from the Germans in fear for their lives.

But for the Russians, being Jewish or a political opponent of the Nazis was not enough to be permitted into their domain. That meant for all the people in the No Mans Land to avoid the Russian border guards or if captured be arrested, and even being sent back to the Germans.

One had to listen to people who claimed to know the border. They claimed to know where and what places the Russians were stationed at and what time their rounds were. It seemed that the best thing to do was to stay close and follow these knowing ones.

About six in the morning, after a cold night spent in the open fields, the people began to move east, from the No Mans Land toward the Russian Zone. For about two kilometers no Russian soldier or guard could be seen. It was a cold morning, and frost was on the ground. Suddenly, from nowhere about twenty Cossacks on horseback galloped toward the crowd, and in no time everybody was surrounded. The officer in charge politely said "Kuda" which meant where are you all going. As if he did not know where all these people were going. He also knew that for the most part they were Jews running from the Nazis.

He asked for legal papers that would enable them to enter Russia. No one had legal papers. The Russians made a ring around the people. The officer declared that everyone was under arrest. Later they would be deported back to the German line.



The Cossacks kept a strict eye on the illegal refugees, walking them slowly back to the direction where they came from. There was no abuse and insult. Perhaps they felt sorry for them, but as they said, the order was to turn them back. From time to time the Russians opened their border to all. At such times people could enter the Russian Zone at will. But, unfortunately, this was not one of those times.

A farm house, almost at the No Mans Land was a border station for the Russians. It was also used as a prison. All those arrested were lined up, counted, no names asked, and put into a dark basement, which was to be their prison until deportation. The basement was dark and cold, already partially filled with people who had earlier been arrested and were waiting to be returned to the Germans together with the newcomers. In the improvised prison, there were no chairs no benches to sit on. No food or water was supplied. A corner was used as a toilet. No guard ever looked in to see how the people were faring. From time to time the door opened for more prisoners to be brought in.

The next morning, after a cold, hungry and thirsty night, the basement door opened and the Russians ordered everybody out. Compared to the Germans the Russians behaved politely, explaining they they are just doing their job.

In the farm yard the refugees were put in line. The officer like explaining the law, read from a paper. He said that because they had crossed the border illegally all were to be sent back to Poland. They were to start walking back toward the German line, with guards on horseback following behind. The officer did not say whether or not the guards would turn them over to the Germans.

Soon they started back in the direction of the Germans. But, when they came very close, without a word the Russians turned around and galloped back to where they came from.





Once again the people stood about in an open field. There were no buildings in sight. The sudden departure of the Russian guards seemed to be a sign from the Russians that the refugees should try again. There was no doubt in anyones mind that try they would.

On the second crossing, the people were more careful. They waited till evening. In the darkness of the night they would not be so easily spotted by the Russians. The second time, with determination, but in silence, they walked straight ahead toward the village occupied by the Russians. This time they were lucky. They encountered no guards. Without hinderance they walked thru villages passing soldiers and police but no one asked any questions. The refugees jubilantly realized that this time they had made it. They were at last with the Russians, free from the Germans. Free of persecution. Again human beings like everybody else.





## CHAPTER VII

### In The Russian Zone Of Occupied Poland

It was like a different world. The streets were full of people freely talking, selling or buying from one another and nobody was afraid. For the refugees from the Germans, it was a feeling of happiness. The town looked like a celebration. Red flags, and picture of Stalin were everywhere. On buildings, on poles, on trees. Pictures of Stalin with his sharp eyes and mustache were looking at everybody. There were also pictures of other leaders, with Russian writings next to them, but not many knew the Russian language, and we couldn't understand or find out who the persons on the pictures were.

the Russian treatment of all the people was equal. Anti Jewish behavior was punishable by law. Antisemitism did not exist, openly at least. The first impression of everybody was happiness. Some who from before sympathised with the Communist system were very proud and did not stop saying "See I told you". Well, anything was better than the Nazi persecution.

The nearest city to go to was Bialystok. Bialystok was about 50 km from the border, and was the link to the rest of Russia, or perhaps to the rest of the world. Once in Bialystok, one could decide what to do next. Either stay, travel to Uncle Strowais in Podwoloczysk or whatever, depending on the situation.

The family Katz, and Wolf were still together, although it seemed to Wolf that the Katzes had plans as to what they would do next, they did not reveal those plans to him. Wolf realized that this was the end of being together.



Wolf needed them very much. He was all alone in a strange world, yet they had the right to do for themselves the best they could. From now on Wolf would have to rely on himself.

This time, traveling to Bialystok was no problem. An individual simply bought a railroad ticket to whatever destination in the occupied zone. No questions asked.

The train to Bialystok was cramped with people. People literally hung on wherever they could. Wolf had put one foot on a step of the train, grabbed a handle and hung on determined not to be pushed off. To ride a train in that fashion had not been easy, but it was important to reach the big city. The possibilities in a big city are greater than in a small town. Though no one awaited him there, his enthusiasm and hopes were for no reason high. Six hours later, the train from the border, with the masses of people arrived at the station in Bialystok.

Before the war, the city of Bialystok had a population of about 300,000. Since the Russian takeover the population had grown to about four times as many. the Jewish percentage of the population had always been a large one, not only in Bialystok but also in the surrounding towns and villages. The Jews for the most part were poor craftsmen and tradesmen, such as tailors, shoemakers, etc. They catered their products mostly to the Polish peasants, and bartered their merchandise for farm products.

Antisemitism toward the Jews, like in all of Poland, was quite pronounced there was no future, nor hope for Jews living there, and most Jewish youth had left for other parts of Poland in search of better economic opportunities. those who could do so emigrated to America or Palestine.

Bialystok was overcrowded. Masses of refugees filled the streets, the houses, hallways, churches, and synagogues. In every nook and cranny there were people, living and sleeping, in the parks, railroad stations and stairways.





Wolf's former neighbors, and friends, the Katzes, went their own way, never revealing their plans or their intentions. Evidently they had a sanctuary to go to. They had never promised Wolf to be always together, they had the right to do the best for themselves. But Wolf, he walked the streets of Bialystok among many others like him with little money in his pocket, not knowing what to do, or whom to turn to.

For the inhabitants there were food coupons. Although food was rationed, on the open market, at a higher price, one could buy all the food wanted. But that was not the case with a (Bierzyniec) refugee. Nobody took care of the refugees. there was not a single Government or private organization where refugees could ask for help or advise. They had to buy what they needed on the open market, where prices were high, and uncontrolled.

November 1939. The weather was cold, already snow was on the ground. During the day it was not too bad. The sun sometimes shone, and the weather was bearable. But the nights were cold, and no place to sleep. Even for money no place could be found to spend the night. Private homes were already overcrowded with people. Hotels did not exist, and the Government did not care, there were no provisions for the homeless. There was also a kind of resentment on the part of the inhabitants toward the refugees. They blamed the refugees for all their problems. Life for them would have been cheaper and easier if not for the refugees. The reasoning was that they should have stayed where they belonged. It could not have been over there that bad. The refugees made life chaotic and disorganized, all because of them.

In Bialystok, like in any other city and town, there was a city council and commissar, maintaining law and order. Schools for children, etc. The peoples attitude toward the system determined the individuals fate. Those who were politically unreliable disappeared. But it was still better than under the German occupation. There was no antisemitism, and if a person did not politically involve himself he or she was left alone.





Actually, the solution for Wolf would be to keep on going to Podwoloczysk, where his relatives lived. But Wolf never considered to go too far into the Russian Zone. He wanted to stay as close as possible to Lodz, and return to the family in a hurry as soon as the war will be over, which by all logic should not last too long.

But staying in Bialystok was not possible either. Daily masses of more refugees kept coming. There was no food, no employment, nor living quarters. If someone turned to the Government for help, the first question was, if you are working? If you are looking for work, one was told that in Russia there is plenty of work for everybody. If needed, even Siberian forests, to cut wood.

For Wolf, cutting wood in Siberia was a dismal alternative. Siberia was famous as a place where the Czar and later Stalin used to banish political prisoners. For ten months a year it was winter, and as cold as 50 below zero.

There was also a possibility to be sent to a warmer part of Russia. Those places were like on the other side of the world. When the war will end, it might be difficult to return home.

Wolf was never a Communist, or even a socialist. He believed that Jews must have a place of their own. A Jewish country would make Jews equal among the peoples of the world, and calm the hatred toward the Jews. No Wolf did not smuggle to Russia because he liked the system. He went because he could not stand the Nazi persecution and to wait out the war, hopefully until the Germans lost it. They had lost the war before.

In the meantime, his situation was not good. He had no home, he was always cold and hungry, and nobody to turn to for help.

In that early November of 1939 the Russians were preparing to celebrate the 21st anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution. The city was decorated with red flags, various slogans, pictures of Stalin and other leaders were everywhere. Everything was written in Russian. Since the people were of other culture, very few people could read or understand the slogans.



There were all kinds of newspapers and periodicals available in various languages, including Yidish, but Wolf could not afford to buy one. Nobody ever threw paper away. Any piece of paper was used for many purposes.

The news of what was happening in the world, and most important, what was happening on the German side. Especially in Lodz where his family was, Wolf got from mouth to mouth. It was not always the most reliable information. But, it was always bad information.

News from the German side of Poland was constantly brought by the steady flow of new refugees. Life over there was becoming for Jews worse daily. The antisemitism, the persecution and the killing of Jews was continually on the rise.

Officially mail service between the Germans and Russians did exist, but letters were never answered, and one never knew if your letter had been delivered.

Wolf of late had doubts if he was right leaving home. It seemed selfish of him to have left the family for his own safety.





## Chapter VIII

### Wolf in Bialystok

For Wolf, life in Bialystok was hard. Beside being homeless, cold and sometimes hungry, his heart and mind were with his family, how much they must be suffering under the Nazi treatment.

If only they were with him, instead of on the other side. Why hadn't anyone come with him? There was only suffering back there, yet nobody wanted to leave. Was it that the others had more loyalty to one another than he had? Was he really selfish. And now was he still to go farther into Russia. Thousands of kilometers still farther from everybody because Bialystok was no place to settle, it had nothing to offer. What to do? Some people in the same predicament as Wolf returned to the Germans, to be with families, no matter what.

To gather information of what was happening on the German side, everyday Wolf went to the railroad station to meet refugees who just arrived. The news in general was bad, especially the news from Lodz was still worse. In the city of Lodz, since it was incorporated into the Reich, became intolerable. A never end of anti-Jewish laws were promulgated, and as usual disobedience was punishable by death. It pained Wolf to hear what was going on there. Why oh why did they all not run out together. Together they could register for work in Russia. Wolf saw many families, with young children, and old parents who registered for work somewhere in Russia. They were almost happy, in safety, and without fear they planned their immediate future.





One morning, as usual Wolf went to the railroad station looking for newcomers from the German side, hopefully somebody from Lodz. A train from the border had just arrived. Many people with shiny faces and many stories to tell. He saw familiar faces from Lodz. He pushed toward them, happy to see somebody from Lodz. Now he would learn what was happening there, perhaps they know something about his family. The new arrivals were anxious to know about life under the Russians.

The news from Lodz, and all the places under the Germans was more of the same. The persecution, the beatings, the killings, all continued even more. No, they did not know his family. The Jews still lived in the same houses as before, but the most recent law was the worst yet. A Ghetto, segregation of the Jews from all other inhabitants was to be established. All the Jews must live together, apart from the Gentile population.

The Ghetto was to be established in the slums of Lodz. Called Baluty. The houses lacked running water, and a dozen outhouses were in the courtyards for all the tenants of the building to share. Water was carried from a pump which stood in the middle of the courtyard.

According to what the refugees told, the designated area for the Ghetto was very small, with not enough housing for even half of the Jews from Lodz, not to mention local Jews who came to Lodz from the surrounding towns and villages seeking safety.

It was not a question of comfort, since Jews in Poland mostly lived three and four to a room. But in the very small section designated for the Ghetto, there would be eight or more people to a room. It also meant sharing a home with strangers, cooking washing and sleeping with strange people in the same room. No privacy. What kind of existence for people would that be.



The law, establishing a Ghetto for the Jews of Lodz ordered every Jew to be in the Ghetto by May 1940. The Ghetto would be surrounded by a wall eight foot high. No Jew could leave except by special permit from the Gestapo. The Ghetto would be guarded by Gestapo, and Polish police on the outside. Inside the Ghetto security would be provided by a special organized Jewish guard. So called Ordnungsgdienst. The Ghetto would be governed by a established Jewish Council. So called Judenrat. Even special Ghetto money would be issued, for use in the Ghetto only, of course.

The Ghetto would be like a Jewish state, under the jurisdiction of the German authority. Which meant, accountable to the Gestapo. The Ghetto would be like a state within a state, but walled in, without contact with anyone from the outside. Experienced people knew what this seperation of races meant. It made them a target for pogroms.

That was the news from Lodz Wolf received from the people who just arrived from there. Bialystok again seemed like the right place to be. Good for Wolf, but what about all the others of his family? According to the Ghetto borders described by the newcomers that house in which Wolf's family lived was three blocks away from the Ghetto, which meant that his family like many others would have to move.

Three blocks from home, still meant exile. A Ghetto with a high wall is like a prison. If a prison had to be chosen, Wolf would prefer Siberia from Germany.

After long consideration, and discussion with others, Wolf decided that the only way to help the family was while there was still time, to return to Lodz and take all of the family back with him to the Russians. It would not be an easy task. Older parents, and infant children, and in a very cold winter doing the same border smuggling from the Germans into Russia.





## Chapter IX

### Returning to German Occupied Lodz

Returning to Lodz Wolf knew that it would not be an easy task to undertake such a dangerous mission. But there was no other way. Leaving them there would mean abandoning them. No, he could not do that. He must return, regardless of difficulties. And he must do it without delay.

Smuggling back to the German Zone was no big problem. This time he already knew the way. It would be a reversal of the way he came to Bialystok.

Leaving the Russian Zone was easy. There was no need to avoid the Russian guards, because they did not question anyone heading to the Germans. However, not many people were going toward the German side. Among the few, Wolf was the only Jew, the rest were Poles and others either returning home, or black smugglers, coming and going for profit. Arriving at the last railroad station on the Russian side, he immediately headed in the German direction, again toward the town of Malkin. He walked the fields alone, not involving himself with anybody.

At about 200 meters before the same railroad station in Malkin Wolf stopped and carefully sized up the situation, what was going on around, and where the Gestapo or police were. If possible to avoid them both.

It was safer to wait for the train from a distance. A ticket could be purchased later on the train, although he had to pay a little more as a penalty.





The train was on the station from a day before, waiting for the regular return to Warsaw where it came from. It could not go any further, since the town of Malkin was the last stop in the German Zone. Not long, people started boarding it. Wolf ran toward the train, like a person in a hurry, afraid not to miss it.

Although there were many police, and gendarmes, nobody stopped him. He jumped aboard and took a seat in a corner, to avoid observation. Soon the train left Malkin en route to Warsaw. This time it was half empty. A few German soldiers sat together there were also a few small groups of Poles. As usual the Poles in their conversation were making anti Jewish remarks.

Perhaps they meant the remarks to indicate a bond with the Germans in their treatment of the Jews.

On the other side of the border, peoples conversation were different. In the Russian Zone it was against the law to make antisemitic remarks. Anti Jewish remarks were punishable with imprisonment.

Wolf, in a corner by himself tried not to be noticed. From the conductor he bought a ticket all the way to Litzmanstadt. It was only a few more hours, and soon he would be back with his family.

The journey from Bialystok to Lodz was without incident. From the train Wolf saw the familiar German notices (Bekantmachungen) addressed to the overall population. Some especially to the Jews.

December 5th 1939 at about 2PM Wolf returned to Lodz at the Industrial (Kaliski) railroad station, which was located about 30 feet above the street and was reached by stairs only, no escalator.

The thirty stairs from the station down to the street and to home 20 Pomorska Str. Although it was quite a distance, Wolf covered it as fast as possible, running most of the way. Into the court yard, and the five stairs into the hallway.

In front of the door to the apartment he stopped and listened. He stood for a few minutes not ringing the bell, just listening.



The factory was working. All the machines were running, as in the old good times. The well known voices of his family could be heard again. God, how good it was not be alone in the world.

On the outside of the entrance door hung the same German certificate with the swastika seal, stating that this workshop (Betrieb) was working for the Reich, and was therefore off limits to undersirables.

Wolf rang the doorbell. Sister Hela opened the door and screamed out "Look who is here". The whole family came to the door, happy to see Wolf, as he was happy to see them. There were also tears especially from Mother. Brother David remarked, "See the hero. I knew he would be back". The typical comment of David.

Simultaneously an avalanche of questions was thrown at Wolf from everybody. He told of everything that had happened to him during the time he was away. He also told them in details the reasons why he returned. Somehow, Wolf got the impression that perhaps they doubted that he really was there, and came back all the way from the Russian Zone. Although no one actually said so.

Wolf told them that his most important reason for returning was that refugees arriving to Bialystok from Lodz had told him that a Ghetto was being established, and according to the border lines of the Ghetto Pomorska street Jews would have to move. Therefore he had decided to return for the purpose that the whole family, without delay should pack up and all together go to the Russians, while there was still time. Once the Russians closed the border there would not be another chance.

The family was astounded to hear that in Bialystok people were talking about a law establishing in Lodz a Ghetto for Jews. But in Lodz nobody heard or spoke about it. Probably, it was not true.

The reply to Wolf's suggestion to leave everything and to the Russian Zone was to forget it.

The factory was working, and they are doing much better than many others. The German for whom they were working was O.K. in addition to pay he also supplied them with food. True, times were bad, but this was war. In time of war, people suffer.





No doubt, life under the Germans will change. They would not initiate a Ghetto, nor pogroms. The Germans needed the Jews. In time of war the occupier needs people they can converse with. No it was not as bad as Wolf implied, and he should stay put like everybody else. Mother added that as long as we have a home, as a bed to sleep in we are still human beings. Once you give up your home, you are nobody, you don't belong anywhere. How well Wolf knew that.

Wolf lost the argument. He could not use the Ghetto as persuasion, no law for impending a Ghetto existed. Not yet. How then could it be that refugees in Bialystok knew that a Jewish Ghetto was to be established.

Not long after, the law for the Ghetto was announced, by then it was already too late to go to the Russians. Officially, the Russian border was closed, guarded to a point that it was no more possible to get legally in. Only those with legal papers could still make it.

Life for Jews under the German's was steadily becoming worse. How much of suffering could a people bear, and still survive? The physical persecution, in addition to hunger and cold was simply unbearable. Many became sick, with no medicine, nor hospital for Jews, not even the Jewish doctors could help. The sick mostly died.

The Kaiser family was large. Including the parents, eleven all together. Nine children, spanning all ages. Five boys and four girls. The oldest was Sarah. She was married to David Michael Bigeleisen. They had two children, a girl and a boy.

David Michael had a flour mill in partnership with two Polish-Germans so called Volksdeutsche. The two partners were related by marrying two sisters. The mill was a big and well known flour supply business in the city of Lodz. It was said that they were wealthy.

The second of the Kaiser children was Moshe. He was married, already had four daughters. He always hoped that the next will be a boy. At the beginning of the war his wife gave birth to twins, girls again.





Brother David was the third. He was married, had a boy Simon. Then came sister Hela. She was married, and had a baby girl. Soon after the Germans occupied Poland her husband left for Russia and disappeared.

Sister Rachel was the fifth. She got married in about January 1940. Right after, they left for the Russian Zone to Uncle Strowajs in Podwoloczysk. In the beginning they used to write, but then mail stopped and no one ever heard from them again. After the war somebody mentioned seeing sister Rachel in Siberia, but it never materialized.

The sixth was Izaak, the darling of the family. A man with a thousand abilities. He could do almost anything.

He was the one who economically put the family back on their feet. Izaak was full of love and devotion to the family. In 1941 after the Germans in their attack on Russia, and with one jump occupied territory almost as far as to Moscow. Izaak volunteered as a skilled mechanic for work in a locomotive factory in the city of Lvov, Ukraines, where shortly after the Jewish workers were all shot. (Oh God) Izaak was among them.

Next was sister Esther. Esther was a beautiful girl, a sexy kind of a woman. She too married in 1940, they decided to leave Lodz for Warsaw. The idea was that Warsaw and the rest of former Poland was considered Polish territory, therefore anti-Jewish laws of the Reich would not apply.

Esther and husband got jobs at the Czysta Jewish hospital, as managers of food supply. The reason why the Germans have not taken over that hospital as they did other hospitals was that in Warsaw typhoid was prevalent, and the Czysta hospital in particular was used for the typhoid sick.

In March 1940 Wolf visited sister Esther in Warsaw, that was the last time he saw her.

Then was brother Abraham. He was rather a shy person. Abraham spoke little, always behaved tactfully. Mother liked him a lot. Last came Wolf. Not good, not bad of a fellow. Very outspoken, and easily getting into trouble.



In January 1940 the law of the Ghetto for the Jews of Lodz was announced, just as Wolf had been told three months earlier when he was still on the Russian side in the city of Bialystok.

How the refugees from Lodz knew about the coming of the Ghetto, while the Jews in Lodz did not, was a mystery.

It seemed that those refugees coming from Lodz must have obtained information of the Ghetto from an inside German source.

Notices about the establishment of the Ghetto was posted all over the city. They indicated the streets, and the borders where the Ghetto would be established. By the middle of April 1940, at the time of Jewish Passover, was to be the final date for all the Jews of the city of Lodz to be moved into the designated Jewish section. Disobedience would be punishable by death.

The establishment of the Ghetto, was about the worst so far to happen. It meant to leave their homes, and go into exile. Even if it was only a few streets away. The designated streets for the Ghetto had always been a congested 90% Jewish section. There were no facilities available for additional tens of thousands of people. Yet time was short, and the order must be obeyed. The inhabitants of that section were considered lucky, they did not have to move, they already lived in the Ghetto.

Jews begged other Jews for a little living space, just to get into the Ghetto in time, they promised that it will be just temporary. Once in the Ghetto they will look for other accommodations. But despite the promise once in, they never moved out, there was no other place to go to.

In desperation, people became cruel, some of the inhabitants refused to take strangers in. Because it was a question of survival people in desperation forced themselves into strange homes.

As a result strange men and woman lived together sharing rooms, the privacy even for the most intimate situations did no more exist.





The Germans gave the Jews almost three months time to obey the law. To get out of the city, and move into the Ghetto, but whoever could moved immediately, often they squeezed five or more into a room, but they felt relieved, at least for the present, but the fear of what will come next was with them, because they knew from history that a Jewish Ghetto was always an invitation to trouble.

Next, on order of the German authorities, was the establishment of an all Jewish government for the Ghetto. It consisted of a so called Judenrat (Jewish Board) with Jewish police, and even Jewish money. As chief of the Judenrat the Germans picked an older man by the name of Rumkowski (See King of the Jews by Leslie Epstein).

Mr. Rumkowski was not well known by the Jews of Lodz. He was in his sixties, with gray hair, and looked older than he was. Before the war, he was elected to the Board of the Jewish community, in charge of caring for Jewish orphans.

Mr. Rumkowski became the all boss of the Ghetto, than alledgedly under pressure from the Germans became a collaborator to the Gestapo, and often behaved like a Gestapo himself.

The Jews, who lived in the territories incorporated into the Reich believed that the persecution applied only to them. For the Jews from the Polish part, although under German occupation this law did not happen. Unfortunately, it was a hope which did not come thru.

The rumor was, that the rest of Poland would have its own Polish Government. Jews as citizens of Poland would retain their equal rights. For some unknown reason that part of Poland became known as the Government. With the belief that life for Jews in a future Poland might not be as bad as in the Reich, many Jews, instead of moving into the Ghetto left for the territories where a Poland might be established.

A Polish Government collaborating with the Germans never came into being. The Germans could not find a single Pole to cooperate with them.





Unlike other countries of Europe, the Germans were not able at least in name to create a government for Poland, or a Quisling (Quisling, the famous Belgian traitor) for Poland.

Wolf's home was pondering the same problem of relocation into the Ghetto. It did not matter that they were working and producing for the Reich. The German who was in charge of the factory tried for an exception with the proof of vitality and need of the product, but it was a matter for the Gestapo, and they refused. With very few exceptions all Jews must live in the Ghetto.

The family Profesorski from mother's side were known as specialists in feathers and downs. The Germans were always in need of feathers and downs for two reasons, first, as blankets, but more important was that they extracted a certain oil product from the inside of the feather.

The Profesorkis, and later brother Moshe, and brother David were in business of feathers and downs. After separating chicken feathers from goose and duck feathers the Germans were the buyers. They had the cleaning factories, and used it for whatever purpose.

Brother Moshe was selected by the Germans as a useful Jew, working for the Reich. He and his family were allowed to remain in their apartment outside the Ghetto. He often traveled in the company of a German Commissar to various cities and towns as the specialist to gather the downs and feathers, which were sent into the Ghetto for packing and shipping into the Reich.

In the Ghetto, a beautiful Catholic church was converted into a factory where brother David was working until in 1944 the Ghetto was liquidated and the Jews were sent to concentration camp Auschwitz. In 1943 brother Moshe lost his usefulness to the Germans, and was ordered with his family, into the Ghetto. He and most of his family later died in Auschwitz.



The dilemma in Wolf's family was the same as with thousands of other Jewish families. What to do? Whether or not to go into the Ghetto where there was no place for them to go to.

There was an other alternative which was like many others did already. That was leave Lodz and the whole German Reich for the Government, Polish part, but still occupied Poland. The place to go to was the small town of Dzialoszyce, in the district of Kielce, about 300 km from Lodz, and the only place where they knew some people. The decision must be made without delay.

After long hours of discussion the decision was that, yes, they will leave Lodz. The logic was that there was not possible room for all the Jews of Lodz in such a small space for the Ghetto. Nothing good can become of such an inhumane existence.

The decision to leave was made, but there were still doubts. Anyone of the family who disagreed with leaving was free to do otherwise. Father and brother David and family decided to stay put. They figured that the war might be over soon, so why the moving? Brother Moshe with family, had his important employment, so he had no reason to leave.

Sister Sarah, husband and two children decided to leave first and the others would follow shortly.

So it was decided to leave Lodz gradually, not all at the same time. Everyone who was leaving would have to take along as much as possible of the most important belongings, as well as fabricated stockings on hand. Any merchandise was more valuable than money, and in case of need could be sold for food or other necessities.

Sister Esther, and husband lived in Warsaw, because they worked for the Jewish Hospital at Czysta, they lived on the hospital premises. Wolf was picked to smuggle stockings to Esther for storage. Wolf would deliver the stockings, return, and do it again. The idea was to have some financial backup. But it did not come out that way. Unfortunately, in those times logic did not prevail.





In those days, public transportation like railroad, buses, even trolley car was forbidden. The only way for a Jew to travel was by horse and buggy. The Jewish horses and buggies were confiscated by the Germans. Jewish transportation became a business for the Polish peasants. They were the only ones with horses and buggies left for their farming needs.

Normally a trip from Lodz to Warsaw by railroad required about 3 hours, by horse and buggy almost 3 days, and was not safe. There was on the roads a lot of harassment by the German and Polish police. There was also a border established between the incorporated part of Poland into the Reich and the other parts of a still Poland.

In March Wolf was ready for his trip to Warsaw. Loaded with stockings to bring to his sister. Winter 1940 was very cold on a trip like that. To keep warm one had to do more walking beside the buggy than riding in it.

While Lodz looked very much German, Warsaw beside the German occupation seemed Polish. Also the persecution of Jews was not as brutal as yet as in Lodz.

Since the beginning of the war the population of Warsaw had grown from about one million and a quarter to perhaps twice that many.

Wolf arrived in Warsaw safely. He went with his packages straight to the Czyska Hospital where his sister and husband lived and worked. Their job was in charge of food for the sick, and workers. Esther has not seen anybody from the family for months. Wolf was greeted with happy tears and many questions about everybody and everything.

People in Warsaw knew what Jewish life and suffering was going on in Lodz, yet they hoped that what was going on in the Reich would not happen in so called Poland. But similar anti Jewish laws were enacted daily. Although a wall in part of the city was already under construction, yet nobody spoke about a Ghetto for Warsaw.

After five days in Warsaw there was time for Wolf to return to Lodz, the same way as had been planned.





The date for closing the Ghetto in the city of Lodz quickly approached. The streets where Jews used to live became deserted. There was no light coming from houses and windows. No people, nor children crying, no cats, nor dogs around. Snow on the ground, but no human footprints. A feeling like in a cemetery, but no corpses around. It was a darkness, just like the dark feeling of the Jewish people of Lodz, and all other places under German occupation.

In Wolf's family it was decided that the exodus from Lodz and the Reich will be gradual two or three at a time. Destination Dzialoszyce. Every person leaving will take along as much belongings as possibly able to carry.

Mother, sister Hela and baby, and brother Abraham would go first, find a place to live, and prepare a home for everyone who would come later. In the meantime, sister Sarah, her husband, and their two children decided not to wait for anyone else. They left Lodz for the same destination ahead of everybody.

The town of Dzialoszyce, district Kielce, belonged to the so called Poland, about 300 kilometers from Lodz, since transportation was possible by horse and buggy only a trip like that could take 5-6 days, they would have to make many stops for rest, and warm ups. Sister Sarah, with family, by passing the town of Tomaszow-Mazowiecki stopped for a longer rest. Tomaszow-Mazowiecki was the first city outside the territories annexed to the Reich.

Unfortunately, Tomaszow-Mazowiecki turned out to be the last stop for most of Wolf's family. Tomaszow-Maz. was about 55 km. from Lodz. There like in many other towns life for Jews was still endurable. Nothing to compare to Lodz. Jews still lived in their houses. Worked in their trades, and walked the streets with little harassment.

Sarah decided that there was no rush to continue their voyage. They decided to stop there temporary, until the weather got a little warmer.



They were also lucky to find an apartment in the house of a well known family in town, that of Mr. Bierzynski.

That temporary home was also to be a resting place for all those of the family who would follow.

Mother, Hela with baby, and brother Abraham left Lodz first, now they had a place to rest, at Sarah's home in Tomaszow-Maz. They arrived exhausted, tired and cold, with all the huge packs they carried. It so happened that in the same building, one large furnished room was available. Mr. Bierzynski the landlord was so kind, and talked them into moving in. So they settled there temporarily. As it turned out, nobody continued to Dzialoszyce. Tomaszow-Maz. became the place until the tragic end.

The next to leave Lodz was Wolf, again going by himself, carrying big bundles. Last to leave was Izaak. For Izaak, everybody else came first. He was the one to permanently close the door in the city of Lodz.

A few days after Wolf's arrival in Tomaszow-Maz. Izaak joined. For the family Kaiser Tomaszow-Maz. was supposed to be a new beginning but like with many others, with the exception of Wolf, for everybody else of the family, it turned out to be a slow end, of pain and suffering.

Spring of 1940. In Tomaszow-Maz. under German occupation the anti Jewish laws, and persecution little by little was creeping in, although not as bloody as yet like in other places under the occupation, with money, one still could buy all necessities for the day. People still worked at their trades, and earned a livelihood. Restrictions comparing to Lodz or Warsaw were still not too harsh. But the anti Jewish laws like in all other places were coming daily. With the same harsh conclusions, non obedience was punishable with death.

It was in the late spring of 1940 that Jewish life in Tomaszow-Maz. took a big turn for the worse. First came the order that all Jews, young and old must wear on the left arm a white band with the star of David on it.





The purpose for the star of David was already well known. Recognition and humiliation. The Nazi scream in the streets like (Stehen bleiben) for the Jew to stand still was already known to everybody. It meant, sometimes grabbing Jews for hard labor, or just beating them up for entertainment. Then came the special curfew for Jews only. A Jew was allowed in the streets between 9 AM and 3 PM only. That was enough time to do some shopping, but not enough time to go to work.

However, it was different if one worked for the Germans. In a case if a Jew worked for a German, a special permit to be on the street was obtained from the Gestapo. To enforce the anti Jewish laws the Gestapo, the SS German gendarmes, and Polish police were mobilized. Also, a Jewish (Ordnungsdienst) Militia was being organized. Their jurisdiction was over Jews only, and of course, accountable to the Gestapo only.

Soon after came the law of establishing a Ghetto for Jews, in the same manner as in all other towns and cities in occupied Poland. The German organizational mind was perfect. They operated on the principle that to avoid resistance, the physical and mental destruction must come first. People weakened by hunger would be in no condition to resist, no matter what happened to them.

Before the war, Tomaszow-Maz. had many industries. The inhabitants were mostly Poles, mixed with Jews, and some of German origin. Although there was a neighborhood called the Jewish section, Jews were also all over the city. The designated boundaries for the Ghetto included streets and houses of gentile or Polish and German origin. That again meant that Jews will leave their houses and apartments in exchange for the gentiles houses and apartments. An Exodus of thousands of families, but the law, had to be obeyed.

As in all other designated Ghettos, there was not enough living space for all the Jews to move in. Again it meant squeezing all the Jews into whatever space was available. People were forced to share their homes with complete strangers.





Strenuous Existence in Tomaszow-Maz.

In Wolf's home, they were facing the same problems for which they had left Lodz. This time, they must leave the meager established one room home for the Ghetto. But, this time places in the Ghetto were given to those who had no place to move into.

But the Jews had also another problem. There was no employment for Jews. No way of earning even for the bare necessities.

Wolf's home was no different. Nobody was working, and the money was gone. Already many times there was hunger in the house. Worst of all, there was no food for sister Hela's 1 1/2 year old baby. Mother got very skinny. Her clothes were just hanging on her.

Sister Sarah with husband and two children still managed. Sarah whenever she could, brought some food in, but it did not help much. The only work for a Jew was thru the Germans department of labor (Arbeitsamt). It was manual labor, with a pick and shovel, and paid very little, like a whole days work could buy a loaf of bread.

The reason why sister Sarah had it somehow better was that the former partners to the flour mill in Lodz, although being (Volksdeutsche) Polish German, had helped her husband up to 1942 by sending him almost weekly money.

Before the war, before Wolf's brother in law Mr. David Michael Bigeleisen joined their flour mill business, they were almost bankrupt. Mr. Bigeleisen by joining as a third partner brought in a trade serving to the Jewish community. The mill produced Kosher flour, with the seal from the Rabinat. For Passover the whole mill was changed, and cleaned under the eyes of a specially hired Rabbi who made sure that the flour was produced strictly Kosher for the Jewish clientel.



Mr. Fritz and Mr. Drebert the two partners of Mr. Bigeleisen were brother in laws, married to two sisters, before the war kept a kind of friendship with their third partner Mr. Bigeleisen the Jew. They did not forget that Mr. Bigeleisen rescued them from bankruptcy. Although Germans, they tried to help their former Jewish partner when the Germans occupied Lodz. By law, a Jew could not possibly be in the flour business. Mr. Bigeleisen was expropriated for the benefit of his partners. Mr. Fritz, evidently a party man, became Commissar of all the flour mills in the district of Lodz, but not so with Mr. Drebert. Mr. Drebert had difficulties obtaining recognition as a German. The reason presumably was that Mr. Drebert was too much in contact with Poles. At times, he went hunting with the then President of Poland Prof. Moscicki.

In the beginning, when Mr. Bigeleisen lost his rights to the mill Mr. Fritz and Mr. Drebert tried to persuade Mr. Bigeleisen to leave for Palestine. They would see to it that he obtained a passport and visa. Unfortunately, Mr. Bigeleisen saw that the war will not last long, once the French and the British will join against the Germans. He also did not trust his former partners. He thought they wanted to get rid of him. Later he realised that they really meant to help him, but it was too late. Still Mr. Fritz and Mr. Drebert, although belonging to the Nazi party, Mr. Drebert every Friday brought money for their former Jewish partner. As a German he could come into the Ghetto. That help went on for about two years, and then it stopped. Mr. Drebert finally got the honor to be excepted as a full German. From then on Mr. Drebert did not show up, the help stopped completely.

By fall 1940 the Jewish Ghetto in the city of Tomaszow-Maz. was completed. Inside and outside the Ghetto the Jews were watched by all kinds available, German, Polish, Jewish Polish and Guards.

Often, German and Polish civilians voluntarily, as a joy or sport helped the Germans in pointing out a Jew when he disobeyed an order.





Every Gentile could abuse and beat up a Jew. If a Jew defended himself he was punished. The Ghetto was gradually bleeding. It started with the so called intelligencia, like doctors, lawyers, and teachers. They were gradually eliminated, shot, or otherwise killed. (Umgelegt). Mostly taken from their homes at night, shot in the streets, sometimes laying in the gutters for hours, for everybody to see.

While there was still plenty of food for all the Gentile population, the people inside of the Ghetto were starving. The weekly provided rations were hardly enough for a day.

Some with former contacts with Poles smuggled themselves out of the Ghetto to exchange household goods, or beg for food. Once they were caught sometimes they payed with their lives.

The only work a Jew could get was thru the (Arbeitsamt) the German employment office. The work was mostly manual labor. The pay was very little, but one went to work rather for a little food they sometimes served the workers. Mostly a slice of bread, and soup. The bread then could have been saved for the family.

There was not always work for all those looking for work. With sadness they went home with hope that next day will be better.

Sometimes, if one loitered about, a call from official or private German might ask for some workers. Often happened that at work the Jews got abused even beaten. Nobody complained, it was normal for that time.

Wolf and his two brothers, Izaak and Abraham as a routine went daily to the employment office, hoping to find work for a day, and with luck, a few days. If food was given at work, mostly it was saved to bring home for Mother, or sister Hela and baby.

The German Labor Office in the Ghetto was full of Jews hoping to find work, most jobs were temporary. Some were lucky to find jobs for longer. Some men, and women worked for the Gestapo, or military units.

Everybody envied them. Regardless of the treatment, they worked, and were getting daily some food, that was about the best that could happen.





Work provided by the Labor Department was mostly temporary, for one or two days. Once in a while the jobs lasted longer. Sometimes even steady. For some unexplained reason, Wolf was seldom assigned to the same work with his brothers.

In charge of the German Labor Dept. in the Ghetto was Mr. Reichmann. Mr. Reichmann was of (Volksdeutsche) German decent. A native of Tomaszow-Maz. He was short, maybe 5.2 inches, a little bald, took himself and the job very seriously.

He was responsible on demand for supplying Jewish workers to all German authorities, like the Gestapo, SS, the German Army, as well on request to German civilians. The Jewish worker did not compete for work with Gentiles, for they had their own employment office.

Herr Reichmann behaved correctly toward the Jews. One never saw that he abused or struck a Jew. He performed his work in a serious and business manner. Herr Reichmann often voiced that he was under tremendous pressure from the higher authorities. Nevertheless, he nervously obeyed orders.

The Jewish workers depended on Mr. Reichmann, because he knew on which places the treatment toward Jews was good or bad. Where food was given, or mistreatment. But, he had to supply the workers regardless. In a Jewish group, there was a Jewish foreman. The foreman was the speaker and responsible for the workers to the Germans.

Often, if the workers did not for any reason satisfy the master, the foreman got the beating. The foreman had to know the workers names. He had to be with them at all times. If food was given, he distributed it. And he was also their paymaster.

However, if the Germans were satisfied, they sometimes rewarded the foreman with better food, and more money. A foremans life was usually easier than that of the workers. To be chosen by Mr. Reichman as a foreman, was usually a sign of preference by Mr. Reichmann.



After a time Herr Reichman noticed Wolf as a daily available and reliable worker. Unlike his two brothers, Wolf was for the most part sent to better jobs. Increasingly, when there was a need for a foreman Wolf was picked as one. Sometimes Herr Reichmann came out of his office and handed Wolf a list of names of people who were assigned for work with himself as foreman. To know more about the work and treatment of the Jewish workers, it was the foreman who had to supply this information to Herr Reichmann. The foreman's information enabled Herr Reichmann to decide what workers to send to a particular place.

The size of a working group usually varied, from a few, to as large as a hundred, or even more. The designated foreman had to line the people up like soldiers, guarded by Germans with rifles, and march them off. One occasion 30 Jewish workers were assigned to work for the Gestapo. They lined up, with Wolf as foreman and a Gestapo on each end of the line, with aimed guns, marching and guarding them thru the city.

While marching to a cadence of one two three the guards ordered them to sing a marching song. The Jewish workers had never learned marching songs, and got confused. But, somebody in line started to sing a song that seemed familiar, they were lucky that the Germans did not know the meaning of the song. It was the American song of freedom "Glory Glory Halleluia". The others picked up the song, marching and singing. Nobody knew the words. But the guards were proud.

Wolf as foreman was responsible for this group. What if some German in the street recognized the song? But he could not stop them from marching and singing. The guards also were marching along, and seemed content, under their guidance the Jews were marching nicely through the streets.

In Tomaszow-Maz. the Jews somehow were all squeezed into the small designated Ghetto. Under the circumstances, they tried their best to make it home. Hopefully, a temporary home.

Mr. Bierzynski, the former landlord, because of his known personality, became a member of the Jewish council for the Ghetto.





Mr. Bierzynski, who after a time became a friend, noticed that in the Kaiser's home there was hunger, being a good person it evidently bothered him. One day Mr. Bierzynski, with the intention to help, suggested that Wolf become a (Ordnungsdienst) policeman for the Ghetto. The reward with extra food rations would help the whole family, and would free Wolf from daily looking for work.

Mr. Bierzynski meant well, he only wanted to help. Wolf was ready to accept the offer, but wanted first to talk it over with the family.

Everyone agreed that Wolf should take the job mostly to alleviate the hunger at home. But Mother did not like it. There had never been a policeman in the family. For the time it sounds innocent, but in the future it might turn out different. A policeman sometimes is required to do all kinds of things. No Mother said, better to be a little hungry. Someday the war will be over. People always suffer during a war, we had it before.

It turned out that Mother was right. A Jewish policeman under orders of the Gestapo, and sometimes on their own, did harm to their own brothers.

Wolf did not insist on becoming a policeman. He was not convinced that this job might be the solution to the hunger problems in the family. Anyway, he was not the type to order people around.

Later he was glad that he did not become a policeman. Before long the Jewish police were compelled to cooperate and do dirty things for the Gestapo.





## Chapter XI

### Life In The Ghetto Of Tomaszow-Mazowiecki

The Ghetto was established. Individuals for a (Judenrat) Jewish Council were selected by the Germans. As it turned out, the Council was to be for the benefit of the Germans, and not for the Ghetto. First, they had to keep an eye on the behavior of the people, and to report it to the Gestapo. To supply to the German laborers whenever they asked for and from time to time a demanded amount of Jews to be provided by the Council for a so called action, to be done away with. There were no extermination places for Jews as yet, but there were other ways of killing them, like shooting, or beating to death.

The Jewish Council consisted of nine members, each responsible for a different department. A friend of sister Sarah's husband, Mr. Bernstein who was an attorney before the war, was appointed as chief of the Council.

Another friend, Mr. Ritchke, who came from the city of Danzig and spoke perfect German, and also behaved like one, became chief of the Jewish (Ordnungssdienst) Police.

Mr. Ritchke, after experiencing and obeying some bloody assignments was smart enough to resign as police chief. He then got a job in the O T (Organisation Todt) as a helper to a German truck driver.

Mr. Bernstein, after a short time as chief of the Jewish Council was (Umgelegt) shot, because he disobeyed a Gestapo order. He refused to submit a list of Jews to be killed.

Also Wolf's brother in law, Sarah's husband was appointed to the Council. He was in charge of helping the very hungry.



Mr. Bigeleisen was in charge of organizing and establishing a soup kitchen for the most hungry in the Ghetto. Financed by the American Joint Distribution. At that time help from American Jews still was reaching Europe. The U.S.A. was still neutral in the war.

Mr. Bigeleisen had his hands full making the kitchen work. It was not easy to secure daily supplies from the Germans, although it was paid with dollars. He was smart enough to stick to his kitchen. He never involved himself with anything else in the Council. Thanks to his brother in law, the Kaiser family were also receiving a daily soup ration. Although the soup was mostly water, it was better than nothing.

For Wolf's family, the assigned place in the Ghetto was like a one room cottage, taken from a Volksdeutsche, who in return obtained a house in the section, which formerly belonged to a Jewish family. In front of the cottage was a little garden, after moving in Izaak immediately put it into use. He planted a little bit of potatoes, onions and other vegetables. Izaak was always very handy, he never knew gardening. He could do almost anything. It did help a little, but did not alleviate hunger.

Most painful was sister Hela's baby, two years old and hungry, crying for food. Often there was no food, even for the baby. The only hope left was, work outside the Ghetto, and if possible bring some food home for the family. Most of the time, when Wolf returned home after a hard days work, the first words from the baby was not for a toy, but for something to eat.

There still were some stockings left, which the family had smuggled out, and brought with them from Lodz. To sell them on the black market was dangerous. Besides, money had no value, and there was little food in the Ghetto to exchange for.

To barter the stockings for food could only be done outside the Ghetto with a gentile. Unfortunately, the Kaiser's did not know any gentiles.





Wolf suggested to the family that he could take a chance with the German manager at the employment office, Mr. Reichmann. Wolf felt that Mr. Reichmann knew him, and sometimes behaved friendly toward him. Mr. Reichmann a German would have enough food in exchange for the stockings. But it might also be dangerous. Suggesting black marketeering to a German who often showed himself in a party uniform with a swastika on his arm. Very risky, especially for a Jew. But there was no one else. Wolf decided to take that risk.

On this day, like every day Wolf went to the Labor Office hoping to find a days work. Unfortunately, this day there was no work. Some of the people after a time went home. Others were lounging about hoping that perhaps later a request for workers might still come in. Mr. Reichmann came out of his office, looked around, and than walked back toward his office.

Wolf thought that this was an opportunity to talk to him about the stockings. Fearfully he approached him and asked if Mr. Reichmann could spare a few moments. Mr. Reichmann looked at Wolf and said "Come in to my office".

In the office Mr. Reichmann closed the door and invitated Wolf to sit down. They were alone. Mr. Reichmann asked "What is it?" Wolf fearfully said "Sir, please forgive me. I have this problem. You see, when we came from Lodz to Tomaszow-Maz. we brought with us some stockings, men's stockings that is, of various kinds. Some are knee high, with beautiful designs. I must sell them. We have no food in the house, and the baby is hungry. Could you Sir need stockings? It would be good if I could exchange them for food. Also, I would like to thank you for the good jobs you are sending me to." Mr. Reichmann after a while said "O.K. Bring some in and I will see if I like them, maybe I will buy them from you."

The next day Wolf brought six pair of men's stockings, hidden in his clothes. Mr. Reichmann liked them, and asked how much they cost. "Well these days money is not worth much" said Wolf " especially when one has to buy food on the black market. If possible food would do well. Please Mr. Reichmann, you decide what to give me for them". He knew well what Wolf meant. "Good" he said "leave it to me".





For a few weeks Mr. Reichmann was more than generous. Everyday Wolf smuggled socks into his office, and in return the German supplied Wolf with food and money. In Wolf's house for a time there was food again. But it did not last for long. Soon there were no more socks to sell. With the German, no socks no food, and hunger returned to the family.

In the Ghetto, life for the Jews became steadily worse. For Germans the Ghetto became a place to see and wonder. How the Jews look, dress and behave. The hungry, skinny, scared, and shabby clothed. The Germans came into the Ghetto for the fun of it. Often beating them up, just to show who the master is.

Almost daily they came grabbing people off the streets taking them away for work. Some never returned.

Killing Jews was routinely and organized. First they killed the intellectuals and the educated. The doctors, teachers, writers, etc. Later on they killed anyone who had the misfortune to be about. Killing Jews was an official part of the Nazi doctrine.

It often happened that during the night they came rounding some up, sometimes shot them just outside the walls of the Ghetto. In the morning the employed Jews were marched by guards to work, they could see with horror the dead bodies lying in the gutters. Often recognizing relatives or friends. It often happened that the workers instead of marching to their regular jobs they were rerouted instead to the cemetery to dig graves for the Jewish victims, and bury them.

It also happened that the chosen to die were taken directly to the cemetery, they had to dig graves than they were forced to kneel at the edge of grave, then shot in the back of the head. They fell right into their own dug graves. Those were mostly the ones who disappeared without a trace.

There was a lot of dying going on in the Tomaszow-Maz. Ghetto.. If not killed outright, people died from hunger, cold or sickness. It was hell. The will to stay alive surmounted everything else.



In addition to all the sufferings spot typhoid came into and was spreading through the Ghetto. Almost every family was affected by typhoid. The typhoid ill had to be kept at home. For Jews there was no hospital. This endangered the other members of the family. Typhoid is a very contagious disease. No medicine whatsoever. All pharmacists as the intelligencia had been killed off.

In Wolf's home mother was first to get typhoid. Then sister Hela, Izaak, and Abraham. Wolf and the baby were spared. It was almost impossible for Wolf to handle and to attend to all the sick. As soon as one got better from the disease he or she was helping with the others. Spot typhoid is a disease of a duration between 10 to 14 days, with a fever like a fire which runs thru the body from head to toe. The most dangerous periods are when the fever reaches the heart or brain. If one survives, weakness sets in for a long time. Only good nourishment returns the person to normal being.

Typhoid was in the family for many weeks, and luckily, they all got well. But how well could they get, since there was little food in the house to put them back on their feet. Mother had it the worst. She never regained much strength. She became so very emaciated that her clothes just hung on her. One's heart almost broke seeing the disintegration of a loved one, and there was nothing anyone could do. And no hope in sight.

In Europe, the Germans had conquered one country after another. Hope that France with the famous Maginot line, together with the strength of the British Empire would stop the German onslaught did not materialize. The Germans outsmarted the Allies. Entering French territory through Belgium, occupying France, while the British ran for their lives back to England.

For the peoples in the already German occupied countries were steeped in gloom. Except for a miracle, nothing to hope for now.





In the eastern part of Europe of that time the Jewish trades concentrated mostly in tailoring, shoemaking, carpentry, etc., also in some extent, in trade and manufacturing. Tomaszow-Maz. was no exception. The Germans were in need of all kinds of craftsmen, and took advantage of those people by establishing in the Ghetto various shops and factories to produce and repair uniforms, shoes, and many other things for the Wehrmacht.

The workers did not have to leave the Ghetto, since the shops and the established factories were neighboring their living quarters. The houses and machinery were confiscated from the Jews, only the needed raw materials were brought in by German trucks. Fabricated merchandise was picked up at the same time.

Those skilled Jewish workers did a perfect job for the Reich. For that as a reward they received some additional bread and soup. The Jewish workers developed a feeling of safety because of their contribution to the war. And the need and appreciation by the Germans of them. Unfortunately, that was not the logic of that time.





## CHAPTER XII

Wolf and his two brothers were still going to the Labor Dept. looking and hoping to find work. One morning Mr. Reichman came out of his office, as usual sizing up his workers, and called out to Wolf to follow him. He said he just received an order from The Organization Todt, OT in abbreviation. (The Organization Todt got the name from a Industrial Reichsminister who was killed in an accident. These people of tens of thousands of Germans and workers of all nationalities performed work for the army behind the battlefields.) The request from OT was for 300 Jewish workers. Mr. Reichman wants Wolf to be the foreman. Seldom was there a request for so many Jewish workers in one working place.

This job was to be a huge construction project in the famous Spalski forests where the Polish aristocracy used to do hunting, as we later found out. (It was meant to be the Wehrmacht Headquarters for the coming invasion of Russia. But it was never used because of the rapid German victories over the Russians in June 1941).

Mr. Reichmann said many workers are working there already, you Wolf, because you speak German and have the experience as a foreman will be in charge of the Jewish workers.

In the morning you will all be picked up by O.T. trucks and taken to work, and will be brought back to the Ghetto in the evening. You will be paid, and also you will get soup and bread for lunch. This job will last a long time, maybe months. It will be a perfect job for you and the others.



The Spalski forests were about 30 kilometers from the city of Tomaszow-Maz. It was one of the biggest forests in Poland, known for its hunting. The famous Nazi Marshal Goering often used to hunt there.

Wolf as foreman of the 300 workers tried to include his two brothers on that job, but Mr. Reichmann for unknown reasons rejected.

Next morning, all the people assigned to that job assembled at the Labor Office, 300 people stood in line like soldiers, Wolf as foreman in front of them with the list of the people waited for the O.T. trucks and guards to be picked up for work.

Soon, O.T. trucks, officers and guards arrived. Everybody stood at attention. Wolf handed them the list of workers. The names were called out. The people were inspected for their health and strength, loaded on the trucks and driven away.

The trip to the working area lasted at least 1 1/2 hours through villages and fields and deep into the forests. On arrival the trucks stopped in front of the construction office. The people again lined up waiting for something to happen. Wolf in front of everybody looked around. Already there were many buildings, and various constructions put up. Many workers of various nationalities were occupied in their work.

After a long wait, a group of officers, all from the O.T. came out from the office. They were led by an elderly officer with gray standing hair and whiskers. (He looked a little like the former German President Hindenburg).

He was O.T. Gruppenfuehrer Heinz. He was the over all boss of the whole enterprise. --Gruppenfuehrer Heinz, the same man often visiting the Ghetto, with a revolver in his hands chasing and terrorizing the Jews. Scaring them just for the fun of it, but never shot anybody.

As the officers approached, Wolf called the group in a military fashion to attention. He then walked closer to them, halted, and reported to the boss, and handed the list of the names to an officer.





Wolf was told that as foreman he was responsible for the conduct and workmanship of his workers. Should there be any problems Wolf was to report to the boss. Those with skills like carpenters, electricians or roof makers were to be assigned to work in their trades. The others were divided into smaller groups working in manual labor, they were handed a shovel and pick and marched off to work. Wolf was ordered to remain behind, because the boss wanted to talk to him.

The boss then told Wolf what his duties as a foreman were to be. As foreman you will have access to all places where Jewish workers will be employed, to keep an eye on them that they behave, and don't loaf. You will be handing them their lunch, you will get the whole payroll for the Jews, with which you will pay them.

In the German way, a foreman's work is to watch the workers, be responsible for them, and if need, also punish them.

But, it was easier said than done. The Gentile workers could not stand to see a Jew around and not working. Even as a foreman he had nothing to do with them. Often Wolf was threatened with physical harm by the Gentile workers. They forced Wolf to work like any other Jews. For Wolf it became a dangerous situation. The boss ordered him not to work like the others, he wanted him to be foreman. The others forced him to disobey the boss and do work.

Eventually Wolf gave in to the Gentile friends, and whenever the boss was not around, he picked up a shovel along with the other Jews and worked sometimes the day long.

The Boss, Mr. Heinz who was in charge of all the construction, for some reason developed a habit of calling for Wolf many times during the day. Unfortunately, Mr. Heinz learned that instead of merely watching and being a foreman, Wolf too was working, just like the others. That brought on a scolding of Wolf's disobedience.

To explain the situation, Wolf told Mr. Heinz that in his absence Wolf was on the road building commando. He had to do it. He was threatened by the Gentile workers. They would not accept a Jew as a foreman. Although Wolf as a foreman had nothing to do with the Gentile workers, yet they did not tolerate him. He was afraid that they might harm him. So Wolf rather worked with the others. He did not mean to be disrespectful.





The boss liked Wolf's honesty. To solve the problem Mr. Heinz decided to keep Wolf from the construction area, and give him instead a job in the office. Wolf's job would be to make a daily written report (Tagesbericht) of how many workers that day came to work, where and what they were doing. Accounting for all the workers, and accomplishments of the day, Wolf would write it, and the German secretary would type it and forward it to the O I Headquarters in Berlin.

Writing a daily report of thousands of workers Wolf needed the cooperation from the German and Polish foreman. Again a problem. Wolf would not dare to ask a German foreman, or a Pole for information about his workers. They would kill him on the spot.

No good. There must be another way. Wolf decided to use his imagination. Every foreman had to submit to the office the daily number of people working in his group. Every foreman then assigned his men to certain work. The amount of workers employed on the day. This information Wolf could get from the office. But what they were doing? That Wolf had to imagine. One must have a terrific imagination to assign so many people to existing or non existing work. Hoping that no one would bother to check. The only person Wolf was responsible to was Mr. Heinz and it seemed that Mr. Heinz was satisfied with Wolf's work. Always reading it very carefully. After all, it was his report to Headquarters. Most important was, that a daily report was available.

The German law required that a Jew must at all times wear on his left arm a white band with the star of David on it. It was also prohibited a Jew from doing office work in a German establishment. Under no circumstances if that office was working for the Reich. Not mentioning that the Organization Todt was a pure military establishment. On Wolf's question how to solve that problem, the Boss had a simple solution, take the band off.



Walking around without the band was very dangerous, especially in this place where the Gestapo steadily came in for inspection, and snooping. With all the difficulties Wolf would rather quit the job. But under the law it was (Verboten) forbidden to quit.

Mr. Heinz the boss insisted "I am the boss here, take that thing off that is an order". From that point on at work Wolf walked around without the armband. Those who did not know him did not suspect that he was Jewish. But on the way to and from work he wore the band.

The boss was friendly to Wolf, occasionally initiated a conversation. Once during such a talk Wolf dared to say that in the Ghetto Mr. Heinz was considered a dangerous German. People in the Ghetto were afraid of him, because he went around with a revolver in his hand. The boss laughed at that. He said "That is ridiculous". He would not hurt a fly. Then he handed his revolver to Wolf and told him to shoot. Wolf became pale in his face. A Jew in front of a German officer with a revolver in his hand. Wolf did as he was told. He took the revolver, aimed at the ground, and pulled the trigger. The revolver did not fire. "You see" Mr. Heinz said "This revolver is just for show, it does not work". Then Mr. Heinz, happy and in a talking mood told Wolf about himself. He was 63 years old, came from the city of Mainz on the river Rhein. He was a chemical engineer by profession. Before the war he worked for IG Farben Industries as a engineer. He lost his job because he never joined the Nazi party. Unable to get another job in his trade, he opened a baking business selling Communion wafers to the church. But he hardly made a living.

At the outset of the war he was mobilized into the Organization Todt as an engineer with the rank of Captain, supervising various works for the army.

After that conversation Mr. Heinz became more friendly to Wolf, talking about family, and some times even politics, often disagreeing with the system and behavior of the bureaucrats, because he was the best German.





On June 21, 1941 Germany invaded Russia. Within a week the German troops occupied all the Russian part of Poland, the Ukraines, and as far as the city of Smolensk. The swift German victories over the Russians were as much a surprise to the Germans as to everybody else. Except for the Germans, who did not stop celebrating their biggest victory yet, everybody else was dismayed and sad.

Were the Germans really that strong that they could defeat the whole world. Or was the world just weak and tired? The jubilation of the Germans did not stop. There was a lot of celebrating among them. Steady parties, drinking, and singing. While among the Poles, Jews and others, there was only glumness and tears.

At the construction, where Wolf and the others were working a change of priorities followed. A new order from Berlin arrived concerning the construction work. Instead of finishing the headquarters the order was to dismantle everything immediately, and all parts shipped off to Smolensk. The order included all the workers, except for the Jews. The city of Smolensk was to be the location for the Wehrmacht headquarters on the East front.

The construction dismantling went much faster than had the constructing. As soon as a structure was taken apart, all sections of it were by trucks immediately shipped east.

One morning Mr. Heinz appeared very very mad, from his looks everyone knew that something was wrong. At the proper time, to Wolf's question whether something had happened, he burst out swearing. "Those S.O.B.'s", meaning his comrades "While our boys are dying on the front (at that time the East front was the only fighting front) they make themselves orgies, and go around drunk". He could not stand it, and at an officer's meeting he told them so.

Yesterday, an order had come from Berlin dismissing him from his job. In two days he must report to headquarters in Berlin. A new boss will take over shortly. Those were the thanks for what he Heinz had done for the Reich.



The dismissal of Mr. Heinz created a new situation for Wolf. He would probably lose his office job, and be compelled to join the others on the construction site. Most important, the additional food which he was able to organize, and take home for the family, will also be stopped.

Two days later, the new boss was to come in and take over. At that time everyone lined up in a military fashion in front of the office. All the German officers, foreman, and workers were there waiting for the new master. A line of cars drove in, a loud order of (Achtung) attention was shouted, and everybody stood stiffly at attention. A line of cars with a big Mercedes in front. The new boss was in it. The cars came to a halt, a young and slender looking man in a SA (Sturm Abteiling) uniform with a swastika band on his arm stepped out. With military precision he approached Mr. Heinz, with the salute of "Heil Hitler" and lots of sayings, the old boss handed over command of the camp to the new one. After a time, and endless achtungs everybody got dismissed and went back to work.

Mr. Heinz, the new boss, and all the officers went into the office, and the procedure was over. Wolf was left standing outside, not knowing what to do. The daily stint was not done as yet. He did not dare to go into the office to do his work. Also what should he do about the Jewish arm band. Should he put it on, then he don't belong in the office. Without the band, a Jew. Wolf just stood there, while German officers passed him by, ignoring him. A German officer does not ask questions, unless it was with his specific job, or just looking for trouble.

Wolf hoped that Mr. Heinz would come out. He then could ask him what to do. After about an hour Mr. Heinz and the new boss came out from the office. Mr. Heinz noticing Wolf standing not far away, in a loud voice called "Wolf, Wolf come here", With some fear Wolf marched over in the direction toward Mr. Heinz and the new boss, stood at attention, and said "Yes Sir". Mr. Heinz introduced him to the new boss saying "This is Wolf. He is the foreman over the Jewish workers, also in charge of writing the daily report for the Headquarters in Berlin".





The new boss sized Wolf up and down and said "Your name is Wolf. My last name is also Wolf. I am ~~the~~ Bannfuehrer Wolf". Again he took a look at Wolf, not knowing that he was Jewish, and ordered him back to work.

Later Mr. Heinz told Wolf that he told the new boss all about him, including the fact that he was Jewish. Mr. Wolf the new boss promised Mr. Heinz to let Wolf the Jew stay on the same job until the end. It was very thoughtful of Mr. Heinz to straighten out such a difficult situation.

Mr. Wolf, the new boss turned out to be very strict in managing the place. But, there was no abuse toward the workers, not even the Jews. Perhaps he was under a time limit, because he showed only interest in dismantling of the barracks and structures as quickly as possible, and rushing them to the city of Smolensk.

There was never with Wolf the Jew any conversation, or chitchat as the former boss had done. He was proper. He emphasized only that the report to Berlin must be done neatly, and perfectly.

Although ~~the~~ Bannfuehrer Wolf looked, walked, and behaved like a typical Nazi, yet to Wolf the Jew he never made any anti-Jewish comments or insults.

The end was in sight for the breaking up of the construction camp, which was meant to be used as the Headquarters for the Wehrmacht. Many of the German and Polish workers did not show up. Which meant that they either went off to Smolensk to work in putting up the Headquarters there, or they had found other employment.

But still maybe a thousand workers were still employed in dismantling the balance of the camp. Among them all of the three hundred Jews.



For Wolf it was a good job, not too much work, and more food. Because he was in charge of handing out the soup and bread to the workers he could always put some aside for himself, which he carried home for the family. But it was coming to an end, and it was time for Wolf to consider what he will do when the work will be over. Again Wolf would have to turn to the employment office with hope that Mr. Reichmann would find for him another job. Certainly never as good as he has now.

Wolf thought, to mention his problem to the boss Mr. Wolf. Just for curiosity. What would he suggest?

At an appropriate time he mentioned to the boss about his worries of the time when the dismantling of the camp will be over, and he will be unemployed. Perhaps Herr Wolf could find him employment when the current job ended. He said, he needed work to support his family.

Perhaps it was Wolf's honest approach that appealed to the boss. In a friendly voice he said "I will see what I can do for you for the coming two weeks I will be away to Smolensk. When I return I will try to arrange something".

Wolf was skeptical that the boss will help him, but even a good word was O.K. But there was still some time before the present work would be finished. So far he had been lucky, much more lucky than his two brothers, who often could not find work.

With the occupation of Russian territories, many of the German military units moved east, and work for Jews became scarcer every day.

The workers lunch for the construction camp came from the main kitchen of the OT Headquarters. About eleven O'Clock every day a small van truck arrived carrying large cans of soup, and one kilogram loaves of bread. Each foreman received the proper amount of soup and bread for his crew. The people stood in line, receiving the soup, and a loaf of bread for five, which they then divided among themselves. Wolf was responsible for the distribution to the Jewish workers.





For Wolf, lunch time was really rush time. Since lunch was only 45 minutes, the food had to be distributed as quickly as possible.

On this day lunch arrived on time as usual, but there was only soup, no bread. To Wolf's question "Where's the bread?" the answer from the driver was, that he got no bread to deliver.

That slice of bread was very important to the workers. Some in fact took it home for their families, and now there was no bread. The workers after finding out that there was no bread, gathered around Wolf asking for the bread, as Wolf would have any power about it. Wolf, like the others, needed the bread, to take home for the family. But what was there to do? Even the Gentile workers turned to Wolf asking for bread. Suddenly he was the recognized foreman.

To calm the hungry workers he said he would go to the headquarters where the kitchen was and talk to somebody. It was really just an excuse because Wolf the Jew would not dare to complain.

Wolf suggested to Willy, the German truck driver who delivered the food that he would like to go to the headquarters with him, to find out why bread was omitted on that day. Willy said it is OK with him.

Willy the driver loaded his truck with the empty soup cans from the previous days lunch, and with other things which were to go back to the depot. Soon Willy was ready to take off.

The boss was not around, Wolf told the secretary that he is taking the afternoon off. Going to the OT Headquarters to find out why there was no bread with the soup, and if this is one occurrence, or no more bread from now on? To the secretary it seemed normal for Wolf to go.

On the way, Willy was very talkative. He told about his family and how lucky he was not to be sent to the eastern front, Russia. He said, the roads through Poland and Russia were dangerous. The partisan's hiding in the forests lured on the Germans, killing many and doing sabotage.



Wolf hardly listened to Willy's complaints. Was he supposed to feel sorry for the Germans? His thoughts were fixed on what he would say, and to whom at the OT Verpflegungs Lager. But first Wolf must not forget to put on the band.

In due time they arrived. Willy stopped his truck in front of the huge kitchen which was supplying cooked meals for all workers employed by OT, there was also a special kitchen for the Germans, for whom better food with meat and more bread was served.

Wolf asked Willy to whom he might talk to about the missing bread, he pointed to the officer in charge of the kitchen, then he got back into his truck and took off.

Wolf stood there alone. He put on the arm band with the star of David and looked around at what was going on.

The OT Headquarters, including the depot was huge. It bordered one side of the Tomaszow river. On the other side it edged the city of Tomaszow-Maz. Railroad cars were loaded and unloaded, and a steady traffic of trucks kept coming and going. It was a very busy place. There were workers of many nationalities, including uniformed Germans assigned to OT until sent to the fighting front. Many Poles, and already a scattering of Russian POW'S and even Jews.

There were many Russians in black uniforms, from the deserted so called Wlasov army (About General Wlasov. He was the Commander of the Russian Army on first line against the German onslaught into Russia, after he was defeated by the Germans, he with his army deserted to the Germans offering to fight against the Communists. His soldiers were then incorporated into the SS. They were given black uniforms, and later became guards of the Ghettos, and concentration camps. They became famous for their brutality, killing and beating Jews).

At the OT Headquarters most interesting to Wolf was the Jews working there, mostly in trades like plumbers, carpenters, electricians, etc. There were also Jews working in the so called (Ladungs Kommando) loading and unloading trains and trucks.





Wolf seeing what a busy place this was, and the amount of workers there he was thinking that perhaps there was a chance for him to work there, after the present job will be finished.

The Jewish workers were easy to single out, because they wore the band with the star of David. Wolf spoke with some of them, asking about the treatment and conditions for Jews at the camp. They said that under the circumstances of official anti Jewish policy, the treatment was not bad. There were anti Jewish expressions, and some mishandling but in general not bad. Because they were working with food there was more than enough food to take home for the family.

To Wolf's question if it would be possible for him to work with them, they answered that he had to talk to the boss, the OT General (Frontfuehrer) Mr. Hasel, they pointed out a man in military boots without a jacket talking to another officer.

The General was a medium size thin man, friendly faced. Wolf thought that the time to act is immediately, if he should be lucky to get the job he must take advantage of this opportunity.

With all the courage he possessed Wolf marched straight toward the General, halted about a distance of five feet, and stood at attention waiting to be noticed. After a while the General turned to him and asked "what do you want?" "Herr Frontfuehrer," Wolf said in a scared voice, "I work at the OT construction Headquarters at the Spalski Woods, the job there is almost finished, and I need a job, could I work here?" The General for a second looked at Wolf with his sharp eyes and said "Tomorrow at eight O'clock in the morning come to work. "Yes Sir, as ordered" replied Wolf.

This meant that he like the other workers from the OT Headquarters will be picked up from the Ghetto by OT guards to be taken to work with others to the main OT food supply depot. (OT Verpflegungslager)

There was another regulation to be taken care of. A worker had no right without permission to switch jobs. If the General would ask for Wolf he could be released from the old job.



Next morning the OT guards who came to pick up from the Ghetto the Jewish workers checked the names on their list very carefully. Wolf's name was not on the list, but they believed his explanation that he was a newly hired worker, and had been ordered by the General to come to work. He was allowed to go along.

At the depot the old workers had their assignments. After reporting to their foreman to verify their presence they disappeared. Wolf was left alone to report to the General who then would assign him to a work group (Commando).

Wolf stood there waiting for the General to appear, did not dare to go into his office. After a time General Hasel came out of his office. Wolf reported to him thinking that he might not be remembered. But there was no trouble. The General recognized him and told him to report to the foreman of the loading (Ladungs Commando) commando. The loading commando was the biggest group working in the depot, of various nationalities, loading trains and trucks of various supplies to the east front. While unloading supplies coming mostly from the west like Belgium, Holland and France.

"Excuse me Sir" said Wolf to the General "But I have not yet been released from my previous job and it is illegal". The General interrupted "leave that to me, go to work". Wolf was never bothered by the Labor Department. Evidently the General took care of that.

The loading commando was a very hard working group, often working 18 hours and longer, until the work was done. Sometimes loading barrels of 200 pounds of herring and wine which had to be carried on shoulders back into the trucks or trains.

The Germans working in that group were used to that kind of work, they were mostly longshoreman from Hamburg or Bremen. But for the others it was back breaking work. The General knew of the hard working group and as a compensation they were given more than enough food, candies and cigarettes.





The opportunity of getting food was enormous, what they did not get legally they took (stole). Sometimes simply out of curiosity about the contents they dropped the cartons or boxes so hard that the boxes broke and the contents spilled out, if they liked what they saw they helped themselves. That was done by all the workers, including the Germans.

Again Wolf was fortunate in finding work where he was able to bring home food for the family, more than enough to share with others. At that time, not being hungry was the best achievement a Jew could hope for.

In the Ghetto, Jews envied the one who worked in places like the OT food supply depot. Often these people returned from work with cans of soup and bread, more than enough for their own families, but also for friends and strangers.

Many hungry people stood waiting at the Ghetto gate for their return from work, begging for something to eat. Almost everyone gave a little something to them. It was a heartbreaking sight seeing so many hungry people begging for anything to eat. Those people were former well to do, educated people with diplomas.

Unfortunately, it was never enough for all and everybody who asked for something to eat. Those were disappointed, and sadly returned to their homes hungry.

In the Ghetto, the hunger and persecution were worse daily. More tragic than the starvation was the constant shooting and killing of Jews by the Gestapo, Schutzpolizei, regular police, and even German civilians who probably were police in disguise.

It was as though an orchestrated program to kill Jews was carried out daily. Sometimes, on the way to work one saw inside and outside of the Ghetto Jewish corpses shot were laying on sidewalks and in the gutters. To pass them, one had to step over or go around them.

The saying in the Ghetto was that all of the Jews are numbered, just waiting to be called, and called they were. Starting with the so called educated intelligencia, who one morning were found in the gutters, outside the Ghetto shot in the head.



## Chapter XIII

Spring 1942. With exception of Switzerland and Sweden, all of Europe was occupied by the Germans. But in Russia they were stopped at the outskirts of Moscow, while in Africa the British stopped the German Army at Alexandria, Egypt.

Most of the still living Jews in Europe under German rule were concentrated either in Ghettos or concentration camps, with almost no hope for the future. Few Jews were in the woods as partisans and very few were hidden by Gentiles.

A scattering of women who had the looks of aryanians lived outside the Ghetto as Christians with Aryan identification papers. That strategy was impossible for men because of their circumcision. Gentiles were afraid to take Jews into their homes. Hiding a Jew was punishable by death.

One day an announcement from the German Labor Dept. appeared on the walls of the Ghetto. It directed people with skills in machine repair, iron working, etc. to register to be sent to work in the locomotive factory in the city of Lvov, which was in the eastern part of Poland, former incorporated into Russian Ukraine, now occupied by the Germans. The Labor Dept. declared that Jews who volunteered for the jobs would have good working conditions, and good pay.

Wolf's brother Izaak was by trade a good mechanic, and knew well how to fix various machines. He and many others decided to volunteer. The promises of good pay, and food lured them into volunteering. Who in the world would think that it was only a trick.





Mr. Reichmann, the German chief of the Jewish Labor Office, was in charge of that recruitment. Wolf spoke to him about if he should volunteer for that work in Lvov.

Mr. Reichmann assured Wolf that there was nothing to worry about. He said "the locomotive factory in Lvov was important for the Reich, good workers were needed there, it did not matter if they were Jews". Wolf was close to his brother Izaak, he thought that he too should volunteer. If it is so good of a job, why not be together with Izaak. But Mr. Reichmann would not hear of it. He absolutely rejected Wolf from going. When asked why Reichmann became annoyed and angry, saying "You have a good job here at the OT depot, what else do you want?"

Shortly after Izaak's registration, he and many others left for the city Lvov, in the Ukraine. A sadness and silence than enveloped the rest of the family. Another one is gone, when will they see him again? Mother especially did not stop crying.

Izaak was loved by everybody. Before the war he was the family's bread winner, and now had gone away. The question and fear, who will be next.

When Izaak's first letter arrived from Lvov, it was like that sun shining into the home. For a time a letter from Izaak came every week. He did not complain, and all were happy to know that he is O.K. But then his letters stopped coming. There was not a word from anyone of those who had left for Lvov. The families were waiting and hoping that mail will eventually come. After about 3 months the families thru private sources learned that all Jews at the locomotive factory in Lvov had been killed, shot.

Dear, dear brother, had been lured away to be killed, because he was born Jewish, his skills and performance did not matter. Mother was always asking why Izaak did not write. She was given all kinds of reasons, but never told the truth. The shock might have been too much to take.



Meanwhile, in the Ghetto of Tomasz-Maz. the killing and hunger continued. The Jewish population became thinner daily. In the early summer of 1942 the order from the Gestapo arrived that the Ghetto was to be dismantled. All the Jews were to be transferred east to be resettled into Russian towns and villages. Farms abandoned by the natives were waiting to be worked on. Houses were empty for people to move in. People were ordered to pack their most important belongings including clothes, and cooking utensils to be ready for relocation. Excluded from the relocation were all those who were employed for the Reich.

The chaos, fear and nervousness in the Ghetto was indescribable. God. What else will happen to us? To the optimists, since in the Ghetto was no work, and no way of existence, relocating for abandoned farms and villages made sense.

In the Ghetto, the Jews of Tomaszow-Maz. made ready for the evacuation, or call it relocation. Those who were working in various military installations, or productive shops and factories for the Reich were excluded. At the time of the evacuation all those excluded were to stay temporarily at their working places, away from the Ghetto. It seemed that the Germans still needed their places, away from the Ghetto. It seemed that the Germans still needed their work, although temporarily. Those ordered to stay on their jobs begged their bosses to intervene with the Gestapo so if possible their families would remain with them. At the OT Verpflegungs-lager General Hasel was asked to do whatever he could. Later the same day Mr. Hasel informed with pride his Jewish workers that the Gestapo granted their request, and that the families of the non evacuated Jews would not have to go with the evacuation.

A big factory building was designated for their families to move into until the evacuation will be over, then they would move back to their former homes.

But the workers, at the time of the evacuation would temporarily live on the premises of their work, afterwards they would join their families in their former homes.







Relatives not sharing the same household were not eligible from exclusion of deportation. Sister Sarah, husband and two children were not eligible to stay behind. Sarah's husband felt that Wolf took care of Mother, sister Hela and baby, brother Abraham, but was abandoning his sister Sarah and her family. It was very painful to hear those accusations but there was nothing Wolf could do. Wolf spoke to the General hoping to include sister Sarah's family from the evacuation, but was denied.

The day before the evacuation of the Jews from Tomaszow-Maz. the workers moved into their places of work, temporarily of course. Their eligible families to be spared from the evacuation, were transferred to the special designated building, presumably for the days of evacuation only. The rest of the Jews were ordered to gather with their belongings in designated places, from where they would march to the railroad station and board trains for the trip east to start a new life on somebody else's land and farms. The whole evacuation was to take two days, but actually it took three.

Usually at night the Ghetto was in darkness, and under a curfew, but for the evacuation all lights were glowing, and the curfew was lifted. People visited one another to say goodbye, and see you there. There, where? Nobody knew.

To keep order inside of the Ghetto, the Jewish (Ordnungsdienst) police had the job to enforce. But on the outside of the Ghetto the Jews were surrounded by all available Gestapo, SS, Shupo (Schutzpolizei) also Polish, Ukrainian, and Lithuanian police. All for the protection of the Jews. But in the morning of the evacuation all of the protectors marched into the Ghetto, the Jewish police were pushed aside.

They forced people into marching lines, shoving, beating and shooting to kill. Scaring them to a point that they were not marching but running to their death.

About 10 AM the first line of marchers bearing their heavy loads could be seen from where Wolf was working.



The Jewish Council (Judenrat) who outlived their usefulness were in the first line of marchers. Also some of the Jewish Ghetto police (Ordnungsdienst) were demoted, and put in line with the marchers. Yells, screams, shouts from all kind of guards surrounding with outstretched guns was heard from far away. Also shots were heard. Beatings by the guards were seen from the distance. And then, the victims were ordered to sing, sing on their march to death.

At the OT Verpflegungslager where Wolf and others were working work stopped completely. The General let them and everybody else including Germans watch the never ending Jewish columns marching toward the railroad. Almost everybody was crying seeing what is happening to the Jews of Tomaszow-Maz. But none attempted to look for their own families. Their families were supposed to be safe from the evacuation. But, Oh God, somebody noticed their family among the marchers. By looking harder, everybody else saw their family being evacuated like all the others. Soon the realization that they were cheated and tricked. It turned out that although promised by the Gestapo that the families of those workers employed for the good the Reich, will not be among the evacuees, yet they were among the first to be taken for the evacuation. It was a bloody, tragic, brutal trick.

After three days of evacuating the Ghetto with the outmost brutal, brutal means, of shooting, beating, and cruelty towards the victims the Ghetto stopped existing. The Ghetto was empty, quite and dark, no lights in the streets. Just homes with furniture. Pots and pans on the stoves, linens and clothing in the closets, but no people, no people. Where are the people, where are our families? Where were they taken to, nobody knew.

Nobody knew where they were taken to. No German knew, not even the General.

For many weeks the left behind Jewish workers tried everything possible to find out what happened to their loved ones, bribing Germans, Poles, civilians and officers, but nobody knew.







After questioning and bribing many Germans and Poles the remaining Jews managed to find a Polish railroad worker who was with the train taking the Jews from Tomaszow-Maz. The Polish railroad worker after receiving money told the story.

The train on which he was working, the Jewson it, went to the town of Treblinka, district Lublin. About 5 kilometers before they reached Treblinka we and all other train workers, with the exception of the Germans, were ordered off the train. The Germans themselves drove the train into the famous extermination place, where at that time most of the Jews from Poland were put to death. They were killed by various means, but mostly by shooting or gassing. Well, we leave the comments to the humane world. Similar so called evacuations were going on in all Jewish Ghettos and camps all over Poland.

More and more of Poland became free of Jews (Judenrein). Jewish Ghettos as such stopped existing in Poland. The Jews who were still needed to work for the good of the Reich, were put in so called labor camps. Sometimes a few of the streets of the former Ghetto, surrounded by walls, and watched over mostly by Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and other SS became the so called labor camps for the Jews.

At work, many of the Gentile coworkers, including Germans approached Jews expressing their sorrow for what was happening to the Jews. Even the boss, General Hasel also said that he was sorry about what happened. He also said he had the best intentions of helping the families of his workers. He had obtained a promise from the Gestapo that the families of his workers would not be included in the evacuation, and will not be harmed. Unfortunately, the promise had not been kept.

Presumably, the world did not know about the Nazi programs of the final solution of the Jews. Anyway, the western world was at war with Germany already. What else could they do?



The final solution for the Jews of Europe was certainly in the making. In German occupied territories, from Norway in the north, to Russia in the east, train loads of Jews were being shipped east to be exterminated (killed). The random killing of Jews happened everywhere. But the most know mass exterminating places at that time were in Treblinka, and Belzec. Both were in the part of occupied Poland, with the sympathy of the Polish population.

In memory of that tragic place Treblinka, a song came into being. Nobody knew where it originated, nor who composed it. But every Jew, with tears in their eyes, and sadness in heart knew it. The lyric was in Yiddish. Treblinka dort, far yedem Yid ein gutes ort, wer es kumt ahin ferbleibt shon dort, ferbleibt of ebig. In english translation. Over there in Treblinka, for every Jew a rest place. Whoever arrives there, remains forever. End of song.

A few days later, after the Jews from Tomaszow-Maz. were taken away the former Ghetto became a labor camp for the about 600 workers, who have returned from the temporary interim.

The barbed wires from the former Ghetto were pulled in, and now surrounded the few remaining blocks of houses. With the same guards watching over them in the same brutal manner as they did the Ghetto. Some of the remaining Jews were left with families, including children. Some questioned why they were so fortunate, and others were not. Those who worked outside the new labor camp, were as before picked up in the morning, and returned whenever they were freed from work. Others who worked before in shops in the Ghetto continued their work now in the camp. All remaining Jews had to be employed. Even the children. A new Jewish committee for the camp by the Gestapo. To keep order, Jewish police were still in existence.

Otherwise the streets were most of the time empty. Everybody was working. Production was high, hoping for recognition from the Germans and their usefulness to the war, and the Reich.







For the remaining Jews of the former Ghetto of Tomaszow-Maz. and now the Labor Camp of Tomaszow-Maz. a kitchen was established for all the Jewish workers. In the morning there was a warm so called coffee, a black substitute (Ersatz) made from roasted barley, for which some did not bother to stay in line for. In the evening there was a warm soup waiting. In reality it was mostly water, the potatoes and little meat was already stolen by the cooks.

In addition the daily ration included a third of one kilogram bread, a little bit of margarine, and sometimes a bit of marmalade. But in the camp there was no hunger, since everybody was working, additional food was distributed in most of the employment places with exception of those shops and factories located in the camp, for them there was no additional food. But they too were not hungry. Many workers working outside the camp were given, or took (stole) more than enough food to share with those who had to live just on the rations.

Although the camp compared to the former Ghetto shrunk to only a few blocks of houses, yet there were sufficient accommodations for everyone. But people, even strangers moved in to live together, simply to avoid being alone. Men and women lived together pretending a relationship replacing the lost families or spouses.

For Wolf, it was not easy to find somebody to share living quarters. He never thought of living with a woman. No the time was not for those things, regardless of what others did.

Wolf found two other men, older than him, who had families before. One was a shoemaker, and the other was a tailor by trade. The three men shared the apartment, each having a room for himself. In the evenings they sat together reminiscing about the past, telling each other about their lives, and families. The two men were decent and serious people. They suffered immensely from the loss of their families, wives and children. Fortunately, the three men fitted in well together.



Wolf often worked late hours. The men in the meantime cleaned the rooms, collected the rations, and kept the soup warm for the ones who worked late. Wolf did the same when possible for them.

Unfortunately, not everybody of the remaining in the camp behaved as was expected in time and tragedy of the still alive Jews. Among some, there was a behavior of unfit immorality. Men and women who before the evacuation had families and children of their own moved in together. Orgies were common, with drinking and gambling.

The excuse was that it made no difference how they lived, as Jews they were soon to die anyway. There were others, the so called conscientious moralists who were against that sort of behavior, if for no other reason than that it violated the memory of the loved ones, who had recently died as Jewish martyrs (Al Kidush Hashem) in the name of God.

The German pressure on the survivors was the same as before. Although they used them for work and producing goods for their need, with no other compensation than very little food. The physical and verbal abuse was going on as before.

Jewish holidays were used as an excuse for killing. Most memorable was the Purim action, where the victims were taken to the cemetery, compelled to dig their own graves and kneeling over were shot in the back of their heads, falling automatically into the graves. All that had to be done was to cover them up with sand.

Sometimes the Gestapo demanded that the Jews among themselves should select a certain amount of Jews for the purpose to be killed. Yes. The angel of death in those days never left the chosen people. The Lord himself must have enjoyed it.

At the OT food depot Wolf and the others were busy day and night. Trains and trucks were coming and going with out an end. Unloading and reloading to be shipped to the eastern front.







Sometimes work continued for 18 or 20 hours, with only a few stops to rest. The hard work did not really matter, especially when the treatment was good and food was more than enough.

While food was more than enough for the military and civilians alike yet except for food everything else was rationed for the Germans. But not so for the civilian workers, including the Jews. There was almost no instance of a civilian worker being turned away when he or she asked the boss for additional cigarettes, candies, or clothing. The Jewish workers had more than enough for themselves, but unfortunately, nobody to share them with.

While the Poles had families to take home to, Jewish workers had boxes full of various things. The Germans often mentioned that the General is better to the Jews than to them, although they knew that rationing was an order to be obeyed.

Often German soldiers asked Jews for cigarettes, candies and other things. They gladly gave it to them. They could not eat it all.

Wolf in that way came to know a few Germans. One soldier in particular became friendly with him. Unseen by anybody else they often talked. The soldier was tall, and had slightly dark skin. He looked more like a gypsy. (Gypsies and Jews shared a similar fate in the third Reich)..

In talks with Wolf he complained about the hated treatment from his comrades, because in his younger years he belonged to the communist party. One day he disappeared and for weeks he was not seen around. Then Wolf saw a soldier on guard who from the back looked like his acquaintance, but the soldier avoided facing Wolf.

Finally they confronted each other. Yes, it was the same man. To the question of what happened to him, and why his face is swollen, bloody, black and blue, he answered that, because of his past, he had been arrested by the Gestapo, and been beaten daily. Now, he said goodbye to Wolf, thanking him for being a good friend. In a few days he will be ordered to the eastern front.



At that time for a German soldier to be sent to the eastern front was equal to a punishment. The high casualties on the front resulted from the partisans who were attacking the Germans ahead of the Russian Army, or "General Frost" who caused many Germans with frozen and amputated parts of the body.

1943. The tide of the war was steady changing against the Germans. They suffered a great defeat at Stalingrad, where they took tremendous casualties. Hundreds of thousands of Germans were taken prisoner by the Russians. Also in Africa the British were victorious at El-Alamein, Egypt and the United States Army landed in North Africa.

In March 1943, to the Jews of the labor camp Tomaszow-Maz. an announcement by the Gestapo was made that those who had relatives in Palestine, and wanted to join them in Palestine should register with authorities.

The Jews were stunned. What does that mean? Could that be another of those tricks as before? To volunteer for something bad. Or, hopefully the world realized what happened to the Jews and forced on the German conditions that would save European Jews from destruction.

The excitement was tremendous. Suddenly there was a glimmer of hope. There was no question of having or not having a relative in Palestine. All the Jews in Palestine were relatives. Still Wolf was skeptical, and decided to wait and see what will happen.

In the camp the police hours were lifted. All night the lights were on so the ones who were working during the day could register at night. Many registered, although skeptical, still hoping for a miracle to happen. Those registered, nervously counted the days to be called for emigration. Than like everybody else at that time, the Jewish emigration for Palestine became known as another fiasco.

About two weeks later the registrants were rounded up, taken to the cemetery, and shot. All of them, and more, were shot. (Umgelegt)>







## Chapter XIV

### Concentration Camp Blizyn

In the District of Radom, about 110 kilometer from Tomaszow-Maz. on the edge of a large forest, there was a Russian prisoner of war camp on the outskirts of a small town by the name of Blizyn.

At one time it housed about 6000 Russian POW'S. Later on, that POW camp was converted into a concentration camp. Compared to other concentration camps Blizyn was small. The maximum inmate capacity was 10,000. It did not have any of the well known extermination facilities, but killing went on by cheaper means. Like beating, shooting and starvation.

At the time of conversion of the camp from a POW to a concentration camp, the camp was empty of any people, except for the German guards. Nobody knew exactly what had happened to the former inmates of the camp, but outside of the camp, next to the barbed wire, were mass graves. The inhabitants of Blizyn whispered that the Russians had been shot and put into those graves. On the graves there were no markings.

Others said that all the Russian prisoners died of typhoid. Meantime, in the Jewish labor camp of Tomaszow-Maz. an order from the Gestapo came that people with skill in the building trade would be taken to build a camp in Blizyn, to prepare accommodations for others. Not long after, the new concentration camp Blizyn was ready to accept inmates (prisoners).

The latest order from the Gestapo in Berlin was that all Jews still living in town, or Ghettos must be moved into concentration camps.



Except for concentration camps, time has come for Poland to become (Judenrein) free of Jews. The rest of the Jews in Tomaszow-Maz. labor camp were no exception. No intervention by General Hasel, that he needs his Jewish workers can help. In the German occupied Europe, the Jews were the property of the Gestapo. Concerning Jews, what the Gestapo ordered had to be obeyed by other German authorities.

The day came for the remaining Jews in Tomaszow-Maz. to be transferred to concentration camp Blizyn. Using the well known procedure of screaming, beating and scaring the people to run into the cars instead of walking, the Jews of Tomaszow-Maz. would become history. Nearby cities like Radomsk, Radom, Czestochowa, were cleaned of Jews as well. Some came into camp Blizyn. Others went to other camps. During that so called action (That's what the Germans called it, action) some in fact were killed on the spot.

At the railroad station in Blizyn, the newcomers were met by chief of the camp (Lagerkommandant) S S . . . fuehrer Herr Nell, with hundreds of SS German, Ukrainien and Lithuanian guards. It appeared that the guards had been especially trained on how to welcome Jews. They all behaved like wild dogs, hitting, beating, chasing, yelling. If one was merely beaten he was lucky.

In concentration camp Blizyn, besides the Jewish inmates, there were also Polish prisoners. The Polish prisoners almost never mixed with the Jews. They were separated from the Jews in every aspect of the day. Their barracks were away from the others. They housed separate, worked and ate separate. The treatment toward the Poles was much better. They received better food, seldom were abused, and once a month packages from home and Red Cross.

Most Poles were in KZ Blizyn on sentence. After the sentence expired they were let free. That was for the Poles, but nothing like that for the Jews. The Jews were sentenced until death as part.





Upon arriving at the KZ Blizyn the new occupants were first counted, than their hair, from where ever hairs are growing on a human body was out, and following they were showered. Finally they were given clothes with the familiar KZ stripes with the star of David in front and back for easy recognition. Their names stopped existing, and instead they were given numbers, which were sewn on next to the star. From than on one was called by number. The only time the names were used was between each other.

After the long organized procedure finally the inmates were assigned to a home in a barrack with 600 others to share. The new home consisted of a shelf like space 6 x 3 feet wide. A straw sack as a mattress, and a blanket made of synthetic fiber. The wooden barracks were put together in a way that one board from the other was about one inch apart. Cold, wind, rain and snow were steady guests inside the barracks. To keep warm people kept close together like lovers.

For a toilet, two huge barrels were put on each end of the barracks which were steady in use, because of the cold, and the amount of people. The smell of urine was terrible. In the early morning, when the barracks were unlocked the barrels were removed by putting sticks thru the handles of the barrels, and two men like the chinese kulis carried them out on their shoulders. After disposing of the contents, the barrels were brought back to put them in their place.

The front part of the barracks, a large part was partitioned off as a dwelling for the capo and his mistress. The morning getting up alarm was 5;30 AM summer and winter. During the night the barracks were locked from the outside, to make sure that the inmates were all safe under lock. During the day everything was rush and chase. Getting up was chase and scream, standing in line for the ersatz coffe was rush, going to work was rush and screams. Counting the prisoners was 3 times a day, and sometimes more.

The time of counting was often dangerous. Prisoners were called out often for no reason, were beaten or even shot. The terror was tremendous.





Blizyn was Wolf's first concentration camp. It was like a temporary existence, always waiting for something terrible to happen. The camp was not as yet organized. Except for the steady pushing, shoving, beating, standing in lines, being counted, one God forbid did not disappear, which was impossible anyway.

The former shops from the Ghettos were to be transferred to the camp, the same people who worked in those shops in the Ghetto were to be reassigned to do the same thing in K 2 Blizyn.

But one working place, a quarry, a huge stony mountain, where the former Russian POW'S were working and dying never stopped operating. Immediately many people were taken to daily, and ordered with hammer, pick and shovel to break the hard big stones off the mountain. Pile them up in one place, and to keep the inmates busy carry the same stones to another place. People were exhausted doing nothing.

The Blizyn concentration camp was for most Jewish prisoners a different situation. To stay alive one had to evaluate the new conditions, and changes, and if possible, shrink to a point not to be noticed. Evidently, the SS and Gestapo had plans for K2 Blizyn which had not been accomplished yet. There was a steady traffic of various trucks and trains arriving at the Blizyn railroad with building supplies, and machinery, to establish shops and factories, and also food.

Wolf noticed that for the purpose of loading and unloading there was no steady group, each time trucks had to be unloaded the Germans at random grabbed people to empty the trucks. The people from the former loading commando at the OT camp in Tomaszow-Maz. recognized that there was an opportunity for better existence by doing the same work in K2 Blizyn.

The same people who worked before as the loading group got together and decided to try to talk to the commander of the camp, SS Fuehrer Nell, and if possible persuade him that a steady loading group (Commando) would be a benefit to the camp. And that the same people with loading experience were available to do the same work.





The camp commander showed interest in having a steady group loading and unloading the goods for the camp. He asked how many people there were from the OT loading commando. There were only fifteen from the old commando. He said fifteen might not be enough, rather thirty would do, but, he would let them know.

Only a few hours later an SS sergeant called for the loading commando. The fifteen of the old group, and many others answered the call. The sergeant ordered that they will be the only ones doing the unloading for the camp, they should stay together, and be ready when called.

Once again Wolf and the others were fortunate. It was like belonging to an elite group within the camp. Many in the camp knew that for the loading commando food and other things will be no problem, and that was almost an assurance for survival.

There were other elite people in the camp. People who were working in the kitchen. They had food, the Capos, foreman and others who cooperated with SS. They too got the better treatment.

The loading commando sometimes worked harder than necessary, they had to establish themselves. Show the SS how reliable they are in helping to build up the camp. The SS was satisfied with their work and did not bother them like the others. They were never beaten, or in other ways persecuted. Soon the expected machinery for the factories and shops arrived, employment for the skilled and unskilled people was established. Men found work in their trades. Many with no trades were worst off. They were doing manual labor, like cleaning the latrines, or other low work. Others were working in the mountain breaking up stones (Steinbruch). The SS had a field especially with those unskilled people. They were most beaten and persecuted. They were an outlet of all the accumulated hatred not only by the Germans, but also by the Ukranien guards, Capos, etc.

Because of the hard work, hunger, beating, and over all persecution in no time many of them died.



Existence in KZ Blizyn became routine. The established shops and factories were about the same as they were in the Ghettos.

Shoemaking, tailoring, carpentry, and tinsmiths. Also a stocking factory was established, exactly the same trade in which Wolf was skilled. All that was produced in the camp was for the German Army (Wehrmacht)

It was not<sup>long</sup> before all the inmates were assigned a place of work. During the day with few exceptions the camp was almost empty. Everybody had to be employed somewhere, no matter if the work was productive or unproductive. Being sick was unsafe for survival.





## Chapter XV

### Europe Summer 1943

The Nazi destruction of the Jews in Europe, and if possible in the World was as important to them as almost winning the war. Many thousands of soldiers, and others, including all kinds of transportations were diverted from the war for the purpose of bringing about the final solution of the Jews.

The Jews were the scapegoats for all the German problems. The Jews were blamed for the war altogether. According to the Nazi logic, the Jewish bankers, and leaders pushed toward war to make money, and eventually take control of the Christian world.

About at the end of 1943 the war for the Germans was not going well. On the east front, the Russians were pushing them back from one city after another. Similar reversals for the German army occurred in Africa, where General Montgomery stopped Rommel at Al-Almein. The only winning war for the Germans was with the Jews, in occupied Europe.

In Concentration Camp Blizyn, the overall situation for the Jewish inmates became from bad to worse. Hunger, cold, and physical abuse were the daily routine. Survival in a concentration camp was a daily struggle. Although some individuals had it better than most others, still death lurked around, day and night. Winter approached early and cold especially, at night was severe. The well known striped KZ uniform which was manufactured from pulplike paper just covered the body, but without warmth.



To insulate oneself from the cold sometimes an empty cement paper bag secretly was put on under the jacket, which made a perfect insulation. But the cement dust from the bag brought lice. Besides, it was strictly forbidden to wear paper, and discovery was severe physical punishment.

The Ghettos were not only cleared of the people and machinery but also of everything else the Jews left behind. Such as clothing, kitchen utensils, and everything possible was transferred from the former Ghettos to the new established shops in concentration camps to be washed, cleaned, repaired, making everything as nice as possible.

Those items robbed from the Jews, were then distributed to the German people, sometimes as a Christmas gesture from the Fuehrer, without mentioning where the things came from. It would not matter anyway.

KZ Blizyn became a very busy place, with strict rules, and discipline. At five O'Clock in the morning, summer and winter, the barrack gates opened from the outside where the SS with abnormal screams and beating the prisoners were chased out of the barracks into the cold to line up to be counted. Every single prisoner had to be accounted for. If for any reason a prisoner did not show up, all inmates were kept standing in line for hours until the missing person was accounted for. When that person showed up, he or she had better have a good explanation, or the punishment could be death.

Finally the camp commander Herr Nell reviewed the prisoners, assuring himself that everything was in order and the appeal was over. After the prisoners washed themselves they had to stay in line for so called breakfast, which consisted of only warm ersatz coffee.

The commander in charge of concentration camp Blizyn Herr S S Sturmbannfuehrer Nell was in his early sixties, about 5.8 inches tall, walked slowly with his hands behind his back, and always accompanied by his dog, a German Shepard. The dog seemed to know well the business of a concentration camp. Herr Nell named his dog person (Mensch) but a Jew he called dog (Hund). Often, when something was not to his liking he himself never punished a prisoner, the person (Dog) did it for him.





He said to the dog ("Mensch beiss den hund") which means, person bite the dog. On command the person (Dog) bit the dog (the Jew), sometimes ripping off the victims flesh.

To get rid of Jews, the so called periodically occurred actions took place. Which meant that some of the Jews had to be gotten rid of, or (Umgelegt) killed.

The killing of Jews actually never stopped, but one got used to the suffering, as long as it was not me for the time. Next to the Jewish camp, there was also a separate camp for Polish and Russian prisoners. They were treated differently than the Jews. Although they too were mistreated and abused, but not just for the purpose to inflict sufferings like toward the Jews. They worked and lived separately from the Jewish prisoners. They were punished only when they did something the SS did not approve of. Once a month the Polish prisoners received packages of food and clothing from home and sometimes from the Red Cross. They also had the privilege of receiving visitors

Ever so often, when there was too much work to be handled by the Jewish prisoners alone, the Jews, the Poles, and the Russian prisoners worked together, that was an opportunity for the Jews to find out from the Poles what was happening in the world, and also with the war. Sometimes the Poles were the only source of information about the outside world, since all other sources were forbidden for Jews.

While unloading trucks or trains one could find even a small piece of newspaper which had to be secretly read. The only radio was with the Germans, which was forbidden to stay too close to pick up some news. But as hard as it was the Jewish prisoners tried to stay as close as possible to the radio, or listen in to the conversation to each other by the Germans, not being able to pick up full sentences, but getting an idea of what was going on in the world. Any bad news for the Germans was like a tranquilizer and deserved hope for the Jewish prisoners.





Summer 1943. The latest news in camp Blizyn was that there was still a Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw, and that Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto rose up against the Germans. Fighting was going on in the streets and houses of the Ghetto. It was thought that all Ghettos in Poland had been dismantled. In Blizyn the SS talking to each other, and saying that the Jews in Warsaw were putting up a stiff resistance against the German army, and heavy fighting was going on already for a time.

In KZ Blizyn the Jews were very proud of what was happening in the Warsaw Ghetto. But also there was a knowledge that it was suicide. Many armies could not win with the German army. There were other Jewish uprisings against the Germans during that period, but they all ended with defeat and loss of lives.

It was hoped that with the Russian army being victorious, and approaching Poland, the Poles themselves would join the Jewish uprising, until eventually the Russians would liberate the city of Warsaw. And hopefully continue farther into Poland. But that was a lot of dreaming. Nothing of the kind occurred. The Poles did not join in the uprising. The Russians did not liberate Warsaw. Not even guns were given to the Jews to fight with.

After a few weeks of desperate Jewish sacrifices the last Jewish remnants of heroic Jewish resistance against the Nazi might, with a few exceptions were destroyed and burned down to ashes.

The killing of Jews in Europe was going on for over 3 years, it had been a daily event. The only surprise was that there was still Jews to be killed. One realized that there were more camps around with Jews. That gave hope that perhaps some of his loved ones could still be living somewhere in those other camps.

Wolf realized that he might be an optimist, but without hope. The task was, to stay alive for as long as possible, one day at a time. That meant to be alert, watch the Germans and their behavior, listen to what they say to each other. When they planned something for the Jews, there were always some preparations done. One had to know to recognize signs.





little time to the next one. Any one temporarily surviving had a chance to stay alive for another few weeks. So, why worry?

In a concentration camp, one seldom saw himself. But seeing the others around, the sick, the starving and half starving, it was hard to imagine that before the war some of them had important positions in the society. They were doctors, lawyers, business men, educators, and rabbis. They had homes, and families. And now, just to look at them. From starvation their faces were swollen, swollen legs and bellies. They had gone thru garbage in search of a potato peel, or anything to put in the belly.

For some reason even washed potato peels were like poison to them. Those who ate from the garbage pile died faster. No one knew why. But it was a fact. Perhaps some chemical in the garbage killed them. Some who could not bear their sufferings anymore, committed suicide. To commit suicide in a concentration camp was easy. All one had to do was, touch the electric barbed wire, in that instant within a minute he was burned black. If not he was shot from the guard on the tower for coming too close to the barbed wire.

But the majority of the Jewish prisoners had no will to further the Nazis plan to exterminate them. Even the most pessimists tried to hang on for as long as possible.

In KZ Blizyn, among other enterprises a stocking factory was established. Exactly the trade that Wolf was skilled in. The stocking machines were outdated, old, and hand turned. Before the war no longer in use. Using hand power instead of electric resulted in a much slower process and less production.

In organizing the stocking factory the SS manager had a big problem. He was unable to find skilled people to make it work. Wolf was still working in the loading commando, had no intention to change. It would just mean less food. Wolf never mentioned his knowledge of the stocking manufacturing. But somebody else who knew, perhaps out of jealousy squealed, and told the manager about Wolf.





The manager of the stocking factory, a seargent in the SS by the nickname of Kushtick, given to him by the inmates. The reason for that name was because of his limping. He was wounded on the eastern front, his left leg was shorter than the right one.

The Kushtick came rather jumping than running, straight toward Wolf. (Evidently somebody had pointed Wolf out to him) and ordered that from now on Wolf was to work in his shop. He was to report to him next morning in the stocking factory.

Unfortunately, for Wolf the good life with enough food came to an end. From that point on Wolf like most others will have to get by with the little daily food ration. Which meant hunger till starvation.

The SS manager of the stocking factory had absolutely no knowledge how to produce stockings. He was put in charge because he was unable for anything else. But he was a good organizer.

From all the people in the camp he was able to find one more person with skill in stocking production. His name was Nathan, just Nathan. Nathan was a native from the city of Czystochowa, Poland. Nathan was almost twice as old as Wolf. He was short, maybe 5.5 inches, a little stocky, serious, and the best human being one could find. Nathan knew the trade from beginning to end, a hundred times better than Wolf. He was a very good mechanic. He could repair broken down machines and make them run like new. The rest of the workers knew nothing about the trade, they had to be learned how to work the machines, close the toes, press them, and pack them in boxes to be sent to the front for the soldiers.

The whole production relied on two skilled people. Mr. Nathan and Wolf. To work with Nathan was easy, the responsibilities for the making the factory work, and production depended completely on the two. While the German manager enforced discipline and pushed for production.

The understanding between Nathan and Wolf was that Nathan would keep the machines in workable condition, while Wolf would teach people to work the machines, and make sure they produce.





Nathan had a large space where he was fixing the machines and he did miracles. He put machines together without spare parts and made them work, and if they did not work he made one machine out of two. Wolf's assignment was more difficult, the more machines became available, the more workers were needed. Teaching people who never saw a stocking machine, make them work on them, and produce, took time. But Kushtick had no time. He wanted to show his bosses that he can produce. And the pressure was most on Wolf, with threats, and screams. The manager put a desk in a strategic spot in the factory, enabling him to look down and keep an eye on everybody.

But he was too shrewd to know that without these two Jews, Nathan and Wolf, he would not have a stocking factory to manage.

Soon the factory was put on two shifts, 12 hours each. A day shift, and a night shift. The same happened with all the other factories and shops in the camp. As for Kushtick, it must be said that toward the workers he behaved not too bad. Seldom an insult, or beating. All he wanted was production. If anybody of the SS or Ukraniens guards bothered his workers, he always defended them. Sometimes even to arguing with the SS. When he could, he tried to get for his workers a little more food.



## Chapter XVI

### Europe and the Jews fall 1943

The war for the Germans was not going well. The Russian army once they broke out of Stalingrad, kept on pushing the Germans more and more west. From Russia to the Ukraine, thru the former Polish border to the city of Tarnopol. For no understandable reasons in Tarnopol the Russians stopped for six months.

Before the war the city of Tarnopol was part of Polish Ukraine. The 1939 pact between Stalin and Hitler, about who gets what after the dismembering of Poland, the Polish Ukraine, including part of eastern Poland, all the way to the river Bug was taken by the Russians, while all the rest of Poland was occupied by the Germans.

The news that the Russian army was liberating Poland from the Germans gave new hope to the Jews in concentration camps. Another 1000 kilometers into Poland and they would survive the war. But there must have been a reason why the Russian army stopped. Every additional day, sometimes hour, with the Germans might make the difference between life and death.

But the mood among the SS and the various helpers was no more as jubilant as when they were victorious on all the fighting fronts. The Reich was crumbling, the casualties were enormous. The soldiers were dying for the Fuehrer, and Fatherland. German soldiers returned from the east front with maimed and frozen legs and noses. Germans who lived in the eastern part of Europe were running for their lives. They almost looked like the Jews when they were running from the Germans. To see all that, it was almost worth all the years of suffering.





From listening into the conversation between the Germans most frantically still believed that finally they would be victorious. The Fuehrer himself promised them that. They also were talking about a new weapon, that would for them turn the tide of the war. No, no good German would dare to doubt the Fuehrer.

Winter 1943. Existence in KZ Blizyn went on, but with a change. Because of a shortage of materials the shops and factories were not as busy as before. There was no more left to loot from the Jews. Night shifts were eliminated, people became unemployed. That was no good to run a concentration camp. People must be kept busy. They must be occupied, otherwise they might get dangerous ideas. Individual killings of Jews was not as prevalent as before.

The latest order from the Gestapo headquarters in Berlin, concerning the Jews made the Commander accountable for each individual. The policy of destroying the Jews has not been changed. It was also OK if a single Jew was killed, but Berlin wanted to know about it.

In cities and towns spot typhoid among the population became common. Although the concentration camps were secluded yet typhoid was brought in by outside visitors. The so called name spot typhoid was because the sick got the body covered with red spots. The typhoid disease is carried by certain lice. It is recognisable by very high fever. Since the inmates lived so very close to each other, sooner or later everyone in the camp came down with the disease. By order of the Gestapo, KZ Blizyn became off limits to outsiders. Nobody came in, and nobody left the camp, not even the SS. Because there were no sanitary measures observed in the camp, everybody had lice. There were no bathing facilities for the about seven thousand inmates, no soap was given. Clothing had to be washed by hand, in a small brook within the camp.



Typhoid disease under normal conditions is a well known killer because of the high fever which runs through the entire body, from head to toe. The most dangerous period in typhoid is when fever reaches the heart or the brain. That is the time when most are physically too weak to survive. But once that critical period is past one has all chances to get well. The complete rehabilitation depends on good nourishment, which of course was not available.

Because of the disease the camp population became significantly less, but luckily the food quantity has not been reduced, which meant that there was more food available for those who survived typhoid, giving them a chance for better recovery, and to gain some strength.

Normally, under the Nazi system, a concentration camp where almost all the inmates were sick with a dangerous disease like typhoid would have been destroyed with all the Jews in it. And it was expected that to happen. But for unknown reasons they did not do it. The opposite happened. They tried to help the inmates to recover. Very few Germans came into the camp, the camp was almost run by the inmates themselves. Although nobody was working the food was given. There was practically no abuse. The Jewish prisoners who went thru the disease and became immune did everything possible to help the sick. Strangers fed strangers, feeding and giving cold compresses to the ones with high fever. If not for the tragic situation, and so many dying, the inmates almost had a good time.

Wolf was no exception. He too got the bug, but was among the lucky ones, he survived. Although very weak, and could hardly stand on his feet. But still lucky compared to others.

It was early spring 1944. Typhoid in KZ Blizyn was subsiding. Almost all the inmates went thru the disease, but few returned to strength to carry on as before. Most of the convalescent sat outside the barracks leaning against the barrack walls, warming themselves in the spring sun while waiting for somebody to hand them some food.







After surviving typhoid Wolf was in a similar condition like all the others, sitting against a wall, warming himself in the sun, and waiting to be handed some food. Hoping to gain strength to carry on a bit longer. Luckily he also had his helpers.

Among the inmates from Tomaszow-Maz. were the four brothers Goldberg. Two of them were working in the kitchen. Working in the kitchen meant having food. Somehow, sister Sarah's husband considered himself a relative of the Goldberg brothers. Because of that the Goldberg's assumed that Wolf must also be related to them.

(Unfortunately, three of the four brothers did not survive the war. The youngest Leo is the only survivor of the whole family, he now lives in Chicago, IL. USA)

The Goldberg's sometimes helped Wolf with soup, or a slice of bread. It was a big help for Wolf to gain some strength for the still sufferings ahead. Thanks again, Friend Goldberg.

At the height of typhoid in the camp, there was a change in SS command. Camp commander Nell for some reason was replaced by a young SS Officer with all the looks of a liquidator. While typhoid was still raging, with fear among the Jews for what might happen under the new commander. Perhaps a complete liquidation of the camp, including the Jews.

But to the surprise even to the Germans, was that the new commander ordered the SS and the other guards to treat the prisoners more humanly, no beatings, and also better food. He let the former patients time for longer convalescence by not forcing them to work. There was no explanation for this better treatment. Was it an order, or was it his own doing?

The new commander was an unexpected miracle. Who could expect such an attitude from a young Nazi officer who must certainly have done many other things in his Nazi career.

As for Wolf, after a few weeks of convalescence and more food, he became strong enough to stand up for roll call, and return to work.



One morning, while standing in line on roll call an SS Sergeant with a history of exceptional brutality was marching thru, and in between the inmates stopped in front of Wolf, and ordered him to step out. Wolf was terrified. One never knew what might happen next. But to Wolf's amazement the sergeant ordered Wolf that he just became foreman of a group of thirty five Jewish workers, their work will be to repair the roads behind the barracks.

Wolf was warned that he will be responsible for the group, that the work will be done quickly and well. Wolf did not like to order people around, besides, it was easier to work than to make others work. One can not expect from weak and hungry people to do hard road labor, with heavy tools. Especially when most people in the group were former typhoid patients and hardly recovered.

Wolf unfortunately became a foreman of a group of Musselmen. (A person almost a skeleton) It was impossible for Wolf to expect from a bunch of Musselmen to do heavy road work. They were hardly able to raise a shovel, not mentioning dig into the ground. Most of the time they stood leaning on their shovels, or even sitting down, which was at work highly verboten. Wolf begged them at least to pretend they were working. But, what's the use. They couldn't work even if they wanted to. It was a dangerous situation. Wolf knew that if the sergeant would suddenly appear and saw the men idle, no one could say what the punishment might be

Suddenly the sergeant riding on a bicycle actually did appear. He saw that nobody was working. In anger he yelled out, calling for the foreman. When Wolf the foreman answered he began to beat him with a long whip with a piece of iron at the end.





The beating of Wolf the foreman went on for about 15 minutes. The SS sergeant then left with a warning that next time if he catches the men not working the punishment will be not just on the foreman, but the whole group.

Wolf was punished because he couldn't or wouldn't force the group of musselman to work. Well, that was the privilage of a foreman. Blood was coming down from Wolf's head and face, and his body was aching all over, but no cries, nor complaints, and no medical help, too dangerous for a Jew to seek medical help.

Wolf washed off the blood, put cold water on his aching wounds and pretended as if nothing had happened. The workers were not any more cooperative or more able to work than before. What they needed was more food to be able to perform that kind of work.

The following morning at roll call the same SS sergeant walked thru the lines looking for Wolf, once he found him, he ordered Wolf that after everybody's dismissed to stay behind. Wolf thought that more punishment is coming for not being a good foreman.

About an hour after the (Appell) counting the prisoners Wolf was still standing in the big yard alone waiting for what will happen next. Finally, the sergeant showed up, as usual his whip in his hand, after a lot of scolding and screaming he demoted Wolf from his foremanship, instead to Wolf's amazement he ordered Wolf to work in the kitchen, and walked away. It was the best thing since a long time that could have happened to Wolf.

The job was to be peeling potatoes, cleaning the pots after cooking, and washing the floors, etc. But most important, it meant more food, and better health which sometimes was decisive for survival.

But in the kitchen the capo did not except new workers. More workers would mean sharing the food with more people, they did not want that. Well, what was Wolf to do. Not obeying the sergeants order is bad, yet telling that they don't want him would mean punishment to them. Wolf was without work, one could not loiter around during the day. To get out of site, Wolf went back to his spot in the barrack.



Wolf did not know how to handle the new situation. He was ordered by SS Sergeant to work in the kitchen, he must do what he was ordered to, yet in the kitchen they don't want him. What to do?

The Jewish camp commander was Mr. Mintzberg. The vice commander was Mr. Siroco, brother in laws. They were the ones representing the Jewish prisoners to the Germans.

Mr. Mintzberg and Mr. Siroco were young good looking and handled themselves humane and smart. The Jewish commander, the capo, the foreman and everybody else who had some power had the right to abuse and punish the Jewish prisoners. Some did either on their own, or on order. There were situations when Mr. Mintzberg was ordered to punish a prisoner, but he did in a way that was not injurious.

During the day, when the barracks were empty of people, usually Mr. Mintzberg and Mr. Siroco were checking to see if anyone feeling poorly stayed behind, or if the barracks were cleaned.

On this occasion Mr. Mintzberg is making his rounds and found Wolf in the barrack on his bunk. What are you doing here this time of the day, he asked. Wolf told him that he was ordered by the sergeant to work in the kitchen but in the kitchen they refused him, with the excuse that they don't need additional help.

Wolf returned to the barrack because he did not know what to do. Not obeying the sergeants order he will be punished. Yet to tell the sergeant that in the kitchen he is not wanted, somebody else might be punished. Mr. Mintzberg understood the situation, and said "Come with me to the kitchen". There he told the foreman that he was following a dangerous course, by disobeying an SS order.

Mr. Mintzbergs intervention was successful. From then on till the end of KZ Blizyn Wolf worked in the kitchen.







## Chapter XVII

### Europe 1944 The New Russian Offensive

After six months stopping at the Ukranien city of Tarnopol the Russian army pushed the Germans toward the capitol city of Poland, Warsaw. Again they stopped on the eastern bank of the Vistula river. There were rumors that the Russians had actually crossed the river, but retreated again to the east.

Following the German army were the so called liberated (Volksdeutsche) former German nationals who had lived in eastern Europe for centuries. The so called Wolga Germans, and Germans from the Baltic countries like Latvia, Lituania, and Estonia. (Now incorporated into the USSR). Also Germans from East Prussia, and many collaborators of all kind and creed were also tailing along seeking protection from the oncoming revenge for their deeds and criminal behavior against humanity.

It was a happy and interesting sight to see the people of the super race to become homeless and hunted refugees running for their lives. They looked frightened, dirty and tired, just like the people running from them, years ago.

But not so exactly. There was still quite a difference. They were still Germans under German rule, protected by the Reich. Nobody mistreated them, and they had plenty of food. It seemed that the best protection they could get was on the compound of a concentration camp. They came by horse and buggy, on bicycles, and even walked carrying some belongings.



German faces were no more as happy as they used to be. No more victories on all fighting fronts, as their slogans on the walls used to say. A few even questioned the wisdom of continuing the war. But the majority of the Germans, especially the SS, the volunteer SS from the former Russian soldiers, and the fanatics who quoted and believed the saying of the Fuehrer that "Soon the wonder weapon was coming and victory will be ours".

KZ Blizyn was bordering the big Spalski forests, which were famous of various partisans groups of many political persuasions. One early morning the partisans coming from the forests attacked the camp. There was much of shooting into and out of the camp. Immediately the inmates had been locked inside the barracks, as a prevention from joining the attackers.

The prisoners had hoped that the partisans in strength had come to free them for the purpose of joining and strengthening the fighting against the Germans. But unfortunately, that was not the case. After a time of shooting into the camp, without hitting anybody, the partisans withdrew back into forests, and that was it.

Next, to pursue the partisans they mobilized a posse of all available men and stooges. When the posse reached the forests the Germans ordered the Ukrainien, Lituanin, and Estonian SS to go into the forests, find the criminals, bring them back, or kill them. Evidently the Germans were afraid, and did not go any further. The others obeyed the order and went into the forests. Next day the heroes returned claiming that they had not found anyone. Later on they said they were in the forests for overnight but were not looking for partisans.

While on the western front the allies invaded Italy, again on the eastern side of the river Vistula, the Russian army stopped for a time before taking the capitol city of Poland, Warsaw. While the western side of Warsaw was still in the hands of the Wehrmacht.





Meanwhile in the camp, talk was that because of the bad war situation, and the Russian encroachment closer toward Blizyn, not to leave behind traces of their atrocities the camp will be destroyed and the prisoners will be evacuated toward Germany.

On one side at the edge of the camp there was a low bunker where potatoes and other food stuff was stored to prevent from spoilage. In spare time the loading commando were working there grading the food, putting in and taking out the rations for the day.

That bunker was situated about 25 feet from the end of the camp, close to the barbed wires loaded with high electric power. Because of the expected evacuation of the people, and the fear for life, some of the loading commando including others decided that from experience evacuation might mean many things, including extermination.

The plan was to dig from that bunker an escape route for about 50 feet under the electric wires to about 25 feet to the other side of the camp. If succesful, they would run into the forest, either hide till the Russians will come, or join the partisans who were in the forests.

But to dig an escape tunnel was a big undertaking. First it must be kept a secret not only from the Germans, but also from other inmates. Then it must be wide enough for a person to crawl through. They dug out sand or whatever material must be disposed of. Not wasting much time the small but secret group went to work. The digging was easy, luckily it was a sandy soil. Disposing of the dug out sand was, together with the potatoe sacks, taken daily to the kitchen. The digging was going on day and night. After a few weeks of hard and coordinated work, deep enough under the electric barbed wires, they reached outside the camp. Except for the last opening of the tunnel everything for the escape was about ready.

The question was how to do it. Just run out as many as possible, would mean that the Germans would be tailing them with all their might. But if they had a partisan backup with force if necessary than the Germans would be forced to let them go. It was decided that before the escape to get in touch with the partisans.





To get in touch with the outside partisans was easier said than done. Somehow, when the dream of escape came about, nobody was thinking of the consequences. Most important at the time was to get out. Once in the forest all will be O.K. But, unfortunately, it was not so.

The forests were not empty. The opposite was the truth. There were many groups of partisans hiding there, of various political persuasions and aims, from the very left to the fascist, and antisemitic right (like the Polish A.K. ) Home army. In the name of those aims, they were hating and fighting each other till death.

For Jews, the partisan groups were the ones helping the Russians. They were better organized, much stronger, and most of all, no prejudice against Jews, while the A K hated the Jews, and killed them when they could. Regretfully, the AK (Armia Krajowa) was associated and supported by the Polish government in exile, London, England under General Sikorski.

There were also in the forest small independent partisan groups without any political nature. Just hiding from the Germans and fighting for the purpose of survival. Some of these were Jews. The Jewish partisan groups had no support from anybody. No guns, little food and clothing. Because being Jews, they had no support from the Poles, and could not mingle with the civilians as the other partisans did.

For a successful escape the idea was to make contact with partisans who would be willing to adopt the Jews into their group. It was decided that before the general breakout, a delegation of two will go out for the purpose of making contact, when that will be done signal the others as agreed.

Not to compromise the escape route the two emissaries would break out thru the barbed wires. The electricians among the inmates would sabotage by making a general shortage in the electricity for the whole camp, including the barbed wires. In darkness then the two would with pliers cut a hole just big enough to squeeze through.





The German procedure was, that in case of a blackout an emergency alert was called. The emergency electric transformer was activated. The inmates were forced into the barracks, and locked in from the outside. All available guards surrounded the camp inside and out, and the order was any inmate outside the barrack to shoot and kill.

As soon as the SS discovered the escape of two Jewish prisoners, six Jewish prisoners were taken at random and shot in front of all the others. The organizers of the escape nervously awaited words, or a sign from the two escapees, weeks went by and nothing came. Finally, from a civilian who was employed in the camp the bad news came. Outside in the forest the two emissaries were captured by the Polish AK and killed them both. Stripped them of their clothes, and left the naked bodies in the forest. That was the end of the escape dream.

On the outside for a Jew there was nowhere and nobody to escape to. Later on, the escape tunnel was discovered by the SS. The bunker was quickly destroyed, and the hole filled with stones and cement. Perhaps somebody squealed. Luckily the SS made no ado about it. Nobody was punished.



## Chapter XVIII

### 1944 War Torn Europe

Summer 1944. The Russian army was still standing on the outskirts of Warsaw, and for almost six months has not moved forward nor backward.

In KZ Blizyn, for the prisoners the anticipation for the Russians to move was a daily disappointment, almost unbearable. One jump by the Russian army, and they could have been liberated. Unfortunately, nothing of the sort happened. The question was why?

Listening to the Germans, it sounded almost comical their complaining how inhumane the Russians behaved toward the innocent German population when occupying them. How the brutal Russian soldiers raped the German women, and stole their belongings. The barbaric Russians, not to compare to the cultured Germans.

Then the news from the SS. Because of the closeness of the Russians to the camp, KZ Blizyn will be evacuated, and the prisoners will be rescued, for safety reasons will be transported to the Reich. Evidently, the safety for the Jewish prisoners was very important to the Germans. Who knows what the Russians might do to them. Each time when Jewish evacuation was anticipated, a shudder of fear went thru the mind of what happens next.

KZ Blizyn was coming to an end. The first group of people were shipped out, nobody knew where to. The empty barracks were immediately dismantled.





Everything possible was loaded on trucks, and taken away. Presumably shipped into the Reich. Things which could not have been moved, or were of no value were destroyed and burned.

Although daily there were fewer people in the camp, yet the amount of the rations were not cut. Suddenly the prisoners had more food than they were able to consume. With absolutely no work, all the bread, soup, and ersatz coffee the prisoners looked better, stronger, and not skinny. Good looking, and stronger prisoners had a better chance for survival. Also the terror was almost gone. It seemed that all the SS was interested in was the evacuation of the prisoners, and destruction of the camp. Finally, it became known that the famous concentration camp Auschwitz was to be the prisoners next destination.

In the city of Auschwitz (Oswiecim in Polish) not far from the industrial Polish Silesian city of Katowice, was the huge concentration camp, world known Birkenau. It was called Auschwitz because it was better known as Auschwitz. It was also famous for the six gas crematories, where most of the Jews were gassed and cremated.

A total of about one million Jews were killed in Auschwitz. Tens of thousands of Germans were busy with the Jews, instead of fighting the war. Although realized that for them the war was going badly, yet it seemed that destroying the Jews had a preference. In 1944, the German propaganda minister Dr. Goebels wrote in his weekly Nazi magazine Das Reich "One day the world will be thankful to the Germans for freeing them of the Jews" End of quote.

August 1944. The final evacuation of concentration camp Blizyn occurred. The prisoners, several thousand with few exceptions, to do the last cleaning of the traces of the camp, were loaded on box cars and shipped to camp Auschwitz-Birkenau.

After a days ride without food, nor water, not even stopping for a chance to go to the bathroom, they arrived at night. As soon as the box cars doors opened the usual familiar greeting from the SS and their stooges were given. The familiar screams, beatings, and dogs barking, and biting was all around.



"Schnell schnell Verfluchte Jude" (Hurry hurry you damn Jew) was often repeated. To avoid the beatings, the prisoners were running, rushing, and stepping on each other, not knowing in which direction. Finally the SS put the people in a military line, and marched them off from the railroad ramp into the camp.

The big illumination that lit up the camp and the sky came from the 4. huge chimneys of the crematories, which puffed with fire from the flesh of the Jews from Lodz. It was just the time of the final liquidation of the Ghetto of Lodz.

Daily transports with Jews in the thousands came into KZ Auschwitz. Some of them were sent into the camp, but most of them went straight to the gas chambers, and then roasted in the crematories.

While marching into the camp, in front above the gate, a sign in the form of a half moon could be seen, proclaiming that "Arbeit macht frei" (Work makes you free).

No selection was made for the prisoners from Blizyn, all marched straight into camp A, the quarantine camp which meant we will take care of you later, to decide whether you should live or die.

In KZ Auschwitz, newcomers who went to the camp had to go thru the procedure of bathing, hair cut out from where ever they were growing. tatoored with a number on the left arm (Wolf's number was B 1543.) And clothed in the famous KZ striped uniform with a number sewn on chest and back next to a yellow triangle as a Jewish identification.

In Auschwitz, all prisoners, Jewish or Gentile, had numbers and various triangle colors on their clothing. The triangle color identified the reason for the persons being in KZ. Yellow color was for Jewish. Red color was a political prisoner. Green stood for criminal, and black for homosexual. Each of the identified prisoners were treated differently. Especially these criminals were used as SS helpers.







Concentration camp Auschwitz, during that period, was one of the most famous places of human cruelty toward mankind.

Few know that the cruelty of Auschwitz was executed mostly against the Jews. Only the gypsies had the privilege to share the fate of the Jews. The Jews and the gypsies were the only victims of the gas chambers and the crematories in Auschwitz, and other places.

Yes, many other nationalities have been killed by the Nazis, by various means. But to the gas chambers, and the crematories only the Jews and gypsies had the monopoly.

To the memory of the gypsy nation of Europe. There is a big disservice done by the world for little mentioning of their sufferings, and dying just because they were born gypsies.

To describe concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau is like describing hell. Auschwitz was not one camp, it was actually eight or ten camps. One camp separated from another by barbed wire. The gas chambers, and the crematories were not a camp, it was like a working place. The camps were named alphabetically. Some were curiously named like Canada and Mexico. Nobody knew where the names came from. Certainly not from the Germans.

Mexico was the camp for women, occupied by about 80,000 females. Camp A was quarantine, camp B was occupied by about 6,000 gypsies. Camp D was occupied by permanent prisoners. The barracks in each camp, although separated by barbed wires, were standing in a similar line, facing each other, with a dirt road in front.

The gas chambers and the crematories were some distance from the camp. They were closer to the railroad ramp, for the convenience of the newcomers.. At that time in Auschwitz, the estimated amount of all prisoners, of all nationalities were about 250,000. Also some children. Camp C was mostly occupied by Russian prisoners. With in their camp, the Russians were highly organized. A former General was the boss. In the camp, the Russian general had more power than the Germans.



Although having a beard was against the rules, yet the Russian general had a beard. The SS did not dare to bother the Russian camp. What the general ordered was obeyed by every prisoner, or enforced by his guards.

At 5:30 in the morning the inmates were chased out of the barracks, for the so called appell, to be in line to be counted. It was still night, and cold, shadows were the people. The only light came from the fire from the chimneys of the six crematories, which at that time were working full blast. The faces of the prisoners, especially the Jewish prisoners, had expressions of tremendous fear.

The wild behavior of the SS, there was always screaming, and beatings. Always rush, and hurry up, hurry up. No opportunity to slow down, or think. Chasing all the people like dogs, all the time. After counting, running to the wash room, than standing in line for the ersatz coffee, and one slice of bread, and a watery soup at night.

Auschwitz was a most busy place. Daily new Jewish transports of thousands of people, mostly from the Ghetto of Lodz, where the last remnants were shipped to Auschwitz, and the Ghetto destroyed.

Among the arrivals from Lodz were also Wolf's two brothers Moshe and David, with some of their families. Moshe while holding on to his baby when they tried to take it away, died with the child, he was taken along. The other daughters were sent to the camp. One survived the war. The only survivor, although still young died in 1977 in Israel of cancer. The other one was shot on a march from KZ Shtuthof right before the end of the war.

Brother David, who also came with the transports from Lodz with his only son Simon. At the selection Simon was taken from his father. David's wife died in the Lodz Ghetto from starvation. David was sent from Auschwitz to a camp in Czechoslovakia, he survived there the war.

At the time the crematories were busy mostly with the Jews, mostly from Lodz, working 24 hours without letup.







While the other Jewish prisoners for the time being were not touched. Individual killings were rare. Shooting and hangings happened only if one hurt a German, or tried to escape. Two days in Auschwitz, camp A, the people from Blizyn were all barracked, clothed, and under proper supervision. But still as in quarantine, not yet a full inmate of Auschwitz. From the quarantine, if they were not to go the crematories, there was a chance to be transferred to another KZ.

As already mentioned the next camp was occupied by gypsies, about 6,000 of them. One morning coming out from the barrack for the appell, Wolf noticed that camp B where the gypsies were, was completely empty. Not a single person around, last night they were all there. What happened to them? As an answer to the question people looked up to the smoking crematories. That's where they were, only smoke was left of the poor gypsies. (After the war, in the town of Freising, near Munich West Germany, Wolf met a few gypsy survivors).

1944 was coming to an end. For the Germans the war was going from bad to worse. The Russian army once crossed the Vistula pushed westward all the way to the city of Breslau (Wroclaw). On the western front, the allies in France and Belgium were pushing the Germans although slowly, eastward.

Over Auschwitz American and British planes were criss crossing the skies bombarding and destroying the nearby synthetic rubber factory in Buna. But Auschwitz, which was only a few kilometers away, the railroad and the crematories were not touched.

The destruction of the railroad, and the crematories would probably not have stopped the killing of the Jews, but would surely have slowed the pace. Perhaps some people could have survived. Unfortunately, the Allies did not see the need to destroy the killing factories. The prisoners made no contribution to the war, and the crematories were working without interruption day and night. For the good of the Reich, and perhaps with the blessing of others.



Concentration camp Auschwitz was more hell than any other camp in Germany. The steady flow of Jews from still remaining Ghettos or other camps was without an end. After releasing the newcomers of their little possessions most of them went straight to the gas chambers. The smell of roasted or burning flesh was always around.

Unlike the Jews, all other inmates were kept alive. The Russian army was coming closer all the time, and that created a kind of chaotic situation. The anticipation of the inmates was that something soon is going to happen to the camp. As for the Jews, they knew well it was not for the Nazis to feed Jews without a reason. Again, there was talk of evacuation. But who will be evacuated, and where to, nobody knew.

KZ Auschwitz, under the control of the SS was performing in a usual manner. The existence of the prisoners had not been changed. From Warsaw came the news of the Polish uprising against the Germans. Evidently the Poles were as successful with their uprisings like the Jews one year before.

Although the Russian army was standing near by, yet it seemed the Russians had no liking for the uprisers, and did not lend them help. It did not take long, a train full of Polish resistance fighters captured by the Germans started arriving into KZ Auschwitz. However, they were treated as prisoners and no harm came to them.

Wolf soon realized that in a place like Auschwitz there was a slim chance to stay alive. Especially in the quarantine camp. It was important to get out from the temporary into the regular camp where existence was more organized, and news easier to come by.

After a few days in the quarantine an opportunity arose. The SS came into the barracks asking for skilled Jews in the trade of plumbing, carpentry, and electricians. They should come forward, men with those trades were needed for work.

Wolf realized that this was an opportunity for him to get out of Auschwitz. But with what skill should he register himself.







Unfortunately, Wolf had no knowledge of any of those demanded trades. To register as an electrician? He did not know a thing about it, the same with plumbing. The easiest lie would be to register as a carpenter. It was not as difficult to work with a hammer, or drive a nail. Hopefully, the work would not be too complicated.

There was no time to hesitate. A decision must be made immediately. Wolf stepped forward, claiming to be a carpenter by trade. He was registered as a carpenter to be somewhere sent to work. He hoped that by getting out of Auschwitz, any other place will be better than this hell.

After a few days the SS called out the numbers ( no names) of those registered people, and told them to be ready to leave. Wolf was among them. They were all given clean clothes, a ration of bread, and then put on trucks, to be driven to the place of work. After and hours ride they arrived at a coal mine around Katowice. In the vicinity of the city of Katowice, Polish Silesia were many coal mines. Before the war, some of those mines for safety reasons were abandoned. After the Germans came, those mines were reopened. The safety for the workers was not a factor.

Down in the mines carpenters were needed to reinforce the underground shafts, while blasting the walls would not collapse. Unskilled people were used as miners, without knowledge about coal mining. Others were pushing heavy lorries full of coal from the underground to the surface.

It was like in the bible, at the time of Moses. The Jewish slaves building the Egyptian pyramids. Despite the hard work, the treatment, the accommodations, and the food was almost good. The coal mine was a labor camp, with an eye on production rather than terror. Unlike in the concentration camp, in the coal mine six people shared a room, with individual cots to sleep on, and more privacy for the individual. Although work was hard and demanding, yet it was bearable, if only it would have lasted.



Wolf came to the coal mine as a learned carpenter, and in the beginning worked as such with other carpenters, but soon the German foreman, himself a carpenter, noticed that Wolf did not know how to use carpenter tools. The German asked Wolf if he really was a carpenter by trade. Wolf honestly answered no. Why then did you lie? Wolf confessed. He wanted to get out of Auschwitz, and this was an opportunity. In Auschwitz under the harsh conditions he would die. All he wanted was to go to another camp.

It seemed that the German was satisfied with Wolf's honesty, but said "I do only carpenter work, you are not a carpenter, you have to leave my group and work some place else".

The next day Wolf was assigned to a group pushing lorries (wagons) full of coal from the underground mines, up to the surface. Pushing lorries all day long, was very hard work. Down in the mines the air was full of dust, making it hard to breathe. Coming up from the dark mine into the sun shine, one could have been blinded. It took a while to get used again to the sunshine.

The hard labor was for Wolf almost impossible to perform. He felt that steadily he was getting weaker, and the work harder to perform. Leaving KZ Auschwitz for the coal mine was no improvement. His condition was bad, something soon would happen to him. It did.

One day, while he and his team were pushing up to the surface a wagon filled with coal, Wolf collapsed. He was unable to rise. He was taken to the infirmary and was put into a clean bed. In the same room were four other Jewish patients. In charge of the infirmary was not a doctor, but a male orderly who knew nothing about medicine.

The rule was that the sick were sent back to the hospital in KZ Auschwitz. At the coal mine, they did not bother with the sick. Once a week an SS doctor from KZ Auschwitz visited the coal mine not to help the sick to get well, but rather to decide what to do with them. Usually the decision was simple. Since they were not able to work, send them back to Auschwitz.







Evidently, Wolf was very ill, his fever was high. The rule was that in the so called hospital all clothes from the patient were taken away, including socks and shoes, a gown like garment was given. That was all the clothes in the patients possession.

The SS doctor, at his routine visit from Auschwitz, decided that all five patients in the infirmary should be taken by ambulance back to KZ Auschwitz. What happened to the sick in Auschwitz, everybody knew. The five patients in the infirmary looked at each other, hardly talking about it, but every one felt that this was their end.

Two days later an ambulance with a big red cross on both sides and on the roof came in and took the five sick away, just the way they were, in the gown without shoes, or any other clothes. Practically naked and barefoot, were taken back to KZ Auschwitz. At the gate, in front of the camp, where the arch with the inscription of Arbeit macht frei was located the ambulance stopped. The doors were opened and the men were told to get out, then the ambulance drove off leaving five sick Jews, practically naked in front of KZ Auschwitz, standing there as though they were begging to get in.

Many uniformed Germans passed them by, but nobody asked why they were standing there without a guard, or why they were on the outside, instead of inside of the camp. They stood there for a long time, not being bothered by anybody, they could have walked away, but would have been picked up in no time.

A long Mercedes with a group of SS officers drove by, then backed up and stopped in front of the five. A tall officer got out of the car, and all the others followed him, they slowly approached the sick and nicely asked "what are you doing here, why are you outside the camp?" In one breath all five told him who they were, that the ambulance brought them from the coal mine, and just left them without telling them what to do.

The officer in charge told them to stay there, some guards will come for them, and they will be taken to the hospital. The tall officer was no other than the famous Dr. Mengele.



## Wolf's Second Typhoid In KZ

In Auschwitz the hospital was a camp by itself, separate from all others. Once the five were delivered to the hospital, the orderly shaved off their hair. Then they were washed, given a clean gown, and put in individual bunks. After two days undergoing various tests Wolf's illness, and the high fever was diagnosed as a symptom of stomach typhoid.

It was his second bout of typhoid in a concentration camp. Stomach typhoid was worse than spot typhoid. In spot typhoid if the fever does not kill the patient, the sickness will be cured within 10 or 12 days. Not so with stomach typhoid. Stomach typhoid after getting better usually repeats itself. And that can go on for months. Under normal conditions medication, and good nourishment could help the sick fight the disease. As many times before, a good angel was watching over Wolf.

Being sick with typhoid one was freed of the German visitors they stayed away, being afraid of catching the disease. There were many doctors among the prisoners, they let them handle the contagious patients, but still making the future decisions of the patient.

Every so often the hospital was cleared of the Jewish patients. Every one knew what happened to them. The crematories chimneys testified to that. Among others, two Jewish doctors were in charge of the hospital for diseases like typhoid.





The two Jewish doctors, although working in the hospital, presumably to help the sick, were as much Jewish prisoners as any other Jew and often met the fate as any other Jew.

The two doctors were Dr. Roth and Dr. Goldstein. Luckily they both survived the war. After the war, Wolf met Dr. Roth in Wroclaw, Poland. And Dr. Goldstein in D.P. camp Landsberg, Bavaria. After the war both were practicing medicine.

Dr. Roth was a native of the town of Suwalke, near Bialystok. While Dr. Goldstein came from Warsaw. Male nurses were helping the doctors. Most known male nurse was Bernard, who actually was a barber by trade, who beside nursing was used as a barber and cut the hair of the newly arrived inmates. While dentists pulled the golden teeth. The golden teeth were sent to the treasury of the Reich. The hair was saved as stuffing for mattresses manufactured for the Germans. Nothing was wasted in the third Reich.

Dr. Mengele was the boss of all the medical facilities. Next to Mengele was a Polish doctor (I don't remember the name) a former colonel in the Polish army, with the power to do with the Jews as he wished. But in the typhoid ward Dr. Roth, Dr. Goldstein and the male nurse Bernard were really taking care of the sick. There was absolutely no medicine available for the sick, yet the two doctors did with caring love everything possible to help the sick.

From the expression on the faces of the two doctors Wolf knew that his condition was not good. He was burning with fever. The food he was getting he could not eat. He became very weak. Because of the very high fever Wolf often fell into a coma, sleeping most of the time. The doctors tried to get the fever down, but were not successful. Bernard the male nurse tried feeding Wolf a little bit at a time, he did not have to do it, but he did it of his own will. Although Bernard and Wolf never met before Bernard out of his good heart, and own will took care of him, often coming to Wolf seeing if he could do something for him.



In concentration camp Auschwitz, and typhoid in addition, Wolf with very high fever, and always sleeping, like in a coma, his condition was critical, fighting for his life. Then nature emerged victorious. Suddenly the fever subsided. Wolf awakened to see the gladness in the faces of the doctors, and Bernard. They tried to push some food into him to help him regain some strength. Unfortunately, this type of typhoid repeats itself, some times more than once. Wolf suffered a relapse with a return of high fever.

For many weeks Wolf fought his illness, the high fever came down, and then returned. But never again to his former critical condition.

After more than a month of on and off dangerous condition, he was finally removed from the critical list and was moved to another part of the same barrack, for less ill patients.

This time he got the upper part of a bunk. Under him was a Hungarian with whom he did not speak the same language. On one side of Wolf's upper bunk was a middle aged Pole who from the moment he saw Wolf, never stopped talking about the Jews in the usually unfriendly manner, and their punishment for not recognizing Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

On the other side of Wolf was a young Jewish man from the same town as doctor Roth, whom the doctor had known before the war. Doctor Roth took a special interest in his landsman and often visited him if only for a chat. Wolf and his young neighbor from Suwalk became friends, and thru that friendship he became closer acquainted with the two doctors. Whenever possible the doctors and the two patients had a nice conversation, about the better times of the past. The mutual Jewish problems, and their hopes for survival.

Bernard the male nurse also continued his friendliness toward Wolf. Bernard often visited Wolf, always bringing him some food.

One day, Bernard told Wolf that he had a deal for him, because the barrack was designated for contagious diseases.







Germans avoided this place, and patients. They did not dare to come near to that part of the hospital, or near the patients. Bernard's deal was that he wanted to conceal a small package under Wolf's mattress, in return he would watch over Wolf, help him, and feed him the best food he could get, in addition to his ration.

Wolf knew that Germans don't come into this barrack, and had no reason not to accept Bernard's offer. He would have done it for Bernard even without compensation.

Bernard came with a small package and put it under Wolf's mattress. He did not reveal what was in it and Wolf did not ask. Bernard as a barber cut the hair of the still new incoming Jews who for the most part went straight to the crematories. Some of them had hidden in their clothing jewelry, diamonds, or foreign currency. According to the regulations every newcomer had to undress. Even the ones who went to the camp never got their own clothing back. (their clothes were cleaned and pressed and given to the Reich, to the German people). Whoever secured the clothes, obtained as well, everything in them.

Wolf did not care what was in the package under his mattress, he never looked into it. But Bernard took care of Wolf like an angel, he brought him more food than he could eat. With that diet Wolf steadily improved his health, and even gained weight, and put on some fat. With thanks to Dr. Roth and Dr. Goldstein, and of course Bernard he felt much better. But still he was not well. The fever stayed with him, and he could not get completely rid of it. As long as he had fever he could not be returned to the camp. Being in the hospital was not safe.

In the meantime, the allied military ring around the German neck was daily becoming tighter. The allies on the west and the Russian army on the east were pushing the Germans out of one city after the other. Slowly but steadily the Germans were driven closer to the old German frontiers, and in some cases already occupied land of the German Reich.



Logically, any other nation would have realized that the war was lost and would have tried to salvage what was possible, before the country suffered complete destruction. But not the Germans. They were told by the Fuehrer that they in the end would still triumph.

They were assured that the (Wunder Waffe) miracle weapon which was on the way would still conquer the world.

In KZ Auschwitz it was rumored that because of the oncoming Russian hordes, and for the safety of the prisoners not to fall into the barbaric Russian hands, all the prisoners will be transferred into the Reich.

The Russian army was now very close to the camp and might God forbid liberate the prisoners. Besides, the evidence of the killing machine and its crematories would not speak well for the cultured Germans. Berlin decided that KZ Auschwitz must be destroyed in a way that would leave no traces of the murderous work which had been done against millions of innocent people, especially the Jews.

But the work of the gas chambers, and crematories continued day and night as if nothing had changed for the Nazis. The thousands of Germans who were employed with that task did their work as if the outcome of the war depended on killing the Jews. The mood among the prisoners was very nervous, and of expectation.

Dr. Roth, Dr. Goldstein and Bernard were talking in whisper to each other. Wolf from experience knew that something was brewing, something big is about to happen. His questions were not rightly answered. Wolf was rather avoided, by passing him by. Dr. Roth came over to his landsman from Suwalk, speaking to him in a whisper, that Wolf would not hear them. Later Wolf found out that Dr. Roth told the man that regardless of his state of health tomorrow he would be released from the hospital, and sent back to the camp where he will be safer. While KZ Auschwitz was being evacuated, nobody knows what they might do to the sick. As for the Jewish patients, there will be a selection for the crematories.







There was no fear for life among the gentile inmates, the selections to the crematories were for Jews only. Dr. Roth left his friend without even looking at Wolf. Evidently Wolf still had high fever, and more ill than the fellow near him. Dr. Roth had no right to release Wolf to the camp. On Wolf's insistence the neighbor revealed that he was to be released from the hospital. In the camp he could join the others in the evacuation, and that the hospital will have a selection.

Came tomorrow, the man from Suwalk was given clean clothes and then released from the hospital for the camp. With tears and envy and fright of what was coming, Wolf said goodbye to his short lasted friend from the hospital. But the short friendship was not completely wasted. Somehow Dr. Roth felt an obligation of friendly continuance. But in Wolf's mind was the question, what will happen to him next? It was the question about life or death.

Dr. Roth and Dr. Goldstein avoided Wolf, they passed by hardly looking at him. As if their conscience bothered them. Bernard often came to Wolf, but pretended that he knew nothing. Wolf managed to speak to the two doctors. He asked them why are you avoiding me? Why don't you send me back to the camp? Help me please. Their answer was, you are still too ill with high fever. You are not strong enough for work. Eventually in the camp you will collapse, if not worse, they would bring you back to the hospital. On the doctors faces it showed much concern for Wolf, but they did not know what to do to help him.

In anticipation of what was about to happen, all the Jewish patients in the hospital showed fear and desperation, many cried. The non Jews in the hospital were very much aware what is coming to their Jewish neighbors. With a cynical smile on their faces and calmly behavior, they knew well that they had nothing to fear. Selections and crematories were for Jews only. Also the Jewish doctors, and hospital workers were in fear for their lives as well. They knew that no Jew was immune from the crematories.



Wolf noticed that the two doctors, while not looking at him, were talking about him. Before the talk of the dismantling of Auschwitz, the doctors and Wolf had nice conversations. Although they were much older yet a friendship and perhaps even a liking for each other had developed. Now Wolf became a problem. What could they do to help him?

Days passed by and nothing happened. But the tension in the hospital and also in the camp did not abate. If anything, the tension grew. One morning, after the doctors routine work Wolf saw Dr. Roth and Dr. Goldstein walking straight toward him. He sat up looking at them expectantly. The two doctors told him to relax, and added, listen and listen carefully. Auschwitz is being evacuated somewhere into Germany. Tomorrow morning Dr. Mengele will come to visit our hospital, he will decide by selection which of the patients will return to the camp, while the others will not. You know that this has happened before, and there is nothing anyone can do. Well, we would like to help you. We have a plan, counting on human psychology. If it will work, we can not promise. But most of all it will be up to you to obey. At tomorrows selection Dr. Mengele will decide each patients fate, after that the hospital will close. Everybody will have to move somewhere.

Dr. Roth continued. Your health condition did not warrant release as of yet, although you look good and strong, your illness and persistent fever was still very much with you. We could not take the chance and send you back to th camp. Now pay attention to what we are saying. The idea we have is this, tomorrow when we line the Jews up for Dr. Mengele's selection we will put you first on the line, in front of everybody else. Next to you will be a person very sick, skinny looking more dead than alive. The physcological trick depends on that, after Mengele looks at you than at the other man, you have a chance that he will choose the other man, and let you go.





Dr. Roth and Dr. Goldstein continued. The moment Dr. Mengele turns away from you to the other man, slowly walk away, as you were discharged. Get out of sight, mingle with the Gentile inmates. You never know what might happen if he should return to look you over once more. Remember, when Mengele looks at you, stand straight, try to show that you are healthier and stronger than you really are. It all depends on how you behave. Perhaps with luck you might get by.

The time until tomorrow was nerve wracking. No matter how hard Wolf tried to relax and calm down his heart and mind was pounding ~~with~~ fear and questions. What if he could not play the doctors prescribed scenario. What if Dr. Mengele puts him on the death list regardless who stands next to him. What chance did Wolf have to trick a man like Mengele. One more Jew or not.

The night before the selection was just horrible, not a minute of sleep or rest, thinking and visualising the next decisive day. Next morning there was the usual commotion of counting people, cleaning the barracks, and distributing the breakfast ration. All that took long nervous hours...

At about ten o'clock a big sudden commotion developed. Everyone who had power came into the barrack screaming, pushing, beating the Jews for a line up. Hauptsturmbah<sup>n</sup>fuehrer Dr. Mengele would make the selection. (As if going to a dance). All the doctors were present. Dr. Goldstein and Dr. Roth looked at Wolf worried. They noticed that he was trembling with fear. As planned Wolf was put first in line, next to him stood a man so weak, unable to stand straight. He was so skinny that his bones were almost coming out of his body. It was evident that even without the selection his time was limited. That was the man the doctors put next to Wolf. In any event, what a terrible situation. Here stood a man fated to die.



All the Jewish patients were standing in line waiting for Mengele to do the selecting. Like God he will decide who shall live, or who should die. The Jews in line were ordered to take off all clothes. The Gentile patients were ordered to stay in their bunks, looking on with interest, or perhaps even learning how to solve their problems with Jews.

A loud order for the Jews to attention, while Dr. Mengele came in followed by a large group of SS officers and others. Without wasting any time Mengele and his entourage walked toward the head of the line where Wolf was standing. He looked at Wolf from top to bottom, sized him up, told him to turn around, looked him over from behind, again told him to turn around, and then, oh God, Mengele made a step toward the next man.

While Mengele inspected the other man, Wolf slowly and calmly walked away from the line, as if obeying and order. Nobody stopped him. It was assumed that if he walked away, he was told to do so. Nobody would dare otherwise. Wolf walked to the furthest corner of the barracks, mingling with the gentile patients. Out of the SS sight.

The selection continued for about another 30 minutes. More than 70% of the Jews were condemned by Mengele to die. Their tatooed numbers were with precission written down. Mengele with his entourage turned around just as calmly leaving the barrack as he walked in. For him a job was done.

Perhaps the next barrack was his next stop, to do a similar job. After it was all over Dr. Roth and Dr. Goldstein visited Wolf, complimenting him on how well he had played his role. Wolf thanked the two doctors very very much for what they had done for him. For without their aid the outcome might have been different. But Wolf's feeling was sad and disgusted. The Jews who were chosen to die never stopped crying, knowing well what their tomorrow will be.





On the morning of the third day after the selection, a group of SS guards came in with the list of the selected Jews, their numbers were called out, ordered them in a line, and marched them out of the hospital. That was the end of them. One wonders if God knew what was happening to his chosen children?

After the selection, an emptiness crept into the hospital barrack. The doctors told Wolf that it was only a matter of days before the hospital would go out of business. Wolf will be sent back to the camp, regardless of his health.

Wolf got his few belongings together. Bernard the barber-nurse took his package from under Wolf's mattress, saying goodbye to everybody around, including the Polish antisemitic neighbor. Wolf was assigned to Camp C. Camp C was a regular working camp, where selections were not often made.

Wolf left the hospital, still with fever, and could hardly stand on his legs. He compelled himself not to show it, not to attract attention to any infirmity. It was necessary to be healthy and strong.

Wolf upon arrival from the hospital was ordered to a barrack with prisoners of many nationalities, including those from France, Greece, Yugoslavia, Poland, but mostly Russians. The plight of the Russians has been completely changed from the time when the Germans marched into their country, occupying one city after another. In those days the life of a Russian was of no value. But since they started winning the war, the treatment by the Germans toward the Russians became quite humane.

Inside the camp, among the prisoners, the Russians wielded the real power. Especially in the Camp C the Russians held indisputable authority, not only did the fellow prisoners obey them, but also to an extent the German SS were afraid to challenge them. The leader of the Russians was a former general of the Russian army, a heavy man about 5.7 feet tall with a beard.



The Russian general was always surrounded by his body guards. He as well as his guards never worked. The Germans somehow tolerated the situation, maybe it was an arranged situation. Unless for a specific reason the Russians did not bother anyone. They never made antisemitic remarks. Because of their recognized power the whole camp looked at them with admiration, and respect.

Concentration camp Auschwitz was in the process of being dismantled, prisoners were shipped out to other camps, the prisoner population including Jews became less daily. But not so for the crematories. The crematoria were working full blast, as in a hurry to finish the job with the Jews. Transports with Jews from the Ghetto of Lodz were still coming in, under the same conditions as before. Heavily guarded by the SS, including their stooges, Ukrainians, Lithuanians and others. One could not mistake them, they wore black uniforms with the SS insignia.

After delivering the last transports from Lodz, it seemed that the Germans had no more need of their Slavic helpers. The black uniformed volunteers were ordered to remove their uniforms. They were given the KZ prisoner striped clothing, and were put into the camp as prisoners. That was their end of career working for the master race. Perhaps purposely they were all put into camp C, where the Russian general was in charge.

The Russian general, and his people did not wait too long for their justice. As soon as night came something was going on in their barracks. There was a lot of commotion, noise and screaming. Everybody heard it but nobody interfered, not even the Germans. Next day it was learned that after a trial by the Russian general, all the traitors were sentenced to death, and the verdict was immediately executed. The collaborators were done away with. No one felt sorry for them, they got what they deserved.

For many years their trade was killing people, especially Jews. They were traveling from Ghetto to Ghetto. From camp to camp, doing their bloody work, now they were justly punished.







On the second day in his new home, in camp C Wolf was assigned to a working commando repairing the roads near the women's camp called Mexico. Wolf wondered why the women's camp got the name Mexico. Just like the men's camp Canada, nobody knew the reason.

At the time of liquidation of Auschwitz repairing roads was a waste of time. But the SS tried to keep the prisoners occupied with something. In the morning, after the usual formalities, pushing, shoving, screaming, hitting, and finally so called breakfast, the prisoners who were assigned to work were lined up like soldiers, some times to the music of the women's orchestra, and often ordered to sing military songs, marched from one camp into another to work as to the assignment.

For those prisoners in the camp the conditions were somehow relaxed, less beating, and less abuse. Everyday people were shipped out from Auschwitz, somewhere to the camps in the Reich. Although there were daily less people in the camp, yet the food amount stayed the same. At that time in KZ Auschwitz food was in abundance. With all the available food, and less abuse, Wolf completely recovered from his typhoid. He became stronger, and looked almost well. But the war was not over yet. There will still be a need for strength for the trouble which was still coming his way.



## Chapter XX

### Protecting The Jews From The Oncoming Russian Army

Although the Russian Army was almost knocking at Auschwitz door, yet in concentration camp existence was routine. All <sup>4</sup> crematoria were still working full blast. Surprisingly they still had Jews to burn. No one could tell with certainty how much longer it would take for the Russians to run the camp over. The sound of the cannons was already heard in the camp. The Germans soon will have to decide about the fate of the prisoners.

Among the inmates there was an uneasy feeling. Logically the thing to do for the Germans was, to open the gate and let them go free. But unfortunately, not the Germans. They continued to do their bloody work as though there was no change in the war. And as though the Russians were still thousands of kilometers away.

One evening, after a days work, they were marching back into the camp for the (Appell) to be counted. When two SS pulled him and three others out of the line, they provided them with a two wheel wagon which had a wide platform. They were rushed to the railroad platform where a Jewish transport had just arrived. From the railroad they picked up three dead bodies. (Evidently these had died during the voyage to Auschwitz). They threw the bodies, schnell, schnell on the wagon and rushed them to the crematoria. In the crematoria they dropped the bodies in front of an oven. They were rushed by the SS because the whole camp was waiting in line for their return in order to be counted.





In a Jew's mind, the crematoria was the last step in his, or her life. Wolf has never before been close to the crematoria. This time he had the opportunity to see with his own eyes how and where so many Jews had died.

The crematoria looked rather like an old fashioned oven in a European bakery, with the difference that instead of baking bread, they baked Jewish bodies.

What Wolf saw was, the dead bodies were brought in from the gas chambers to the crematoria, and dumped on the floor in front of the oven. The oven was about six steps down the floor level. On the floor dead bodies of men and women were scattered about. Only strong Jewish men were picked from among the inmates to work at and around the crematoria, after a time working there they too were killed, and others were picked to replace them. Not one of them survived the war. The SS did not intend to let eye witnesses survive.

At the oven where Wolf and the others dumped the bodies picked up from the ramp, was a Jewish man working the oven. He was feeding the ovens with the Jewish bodies. While Wolf was on the floor, the man six steps lower looked a little heavy and chubby. (The Germans fed them well). The man had difficulty lifting the whole bodies to shove them into the oven. To make it easier for himself with an axe he chopped the bodies into parts and threw them piecemeal into the oven.

Talking to the man was strictly verboten, besides, there was no time, being rushed back to the camp. They looked at each other with sad eyes without saying a word. But the man shoved a full loaf of bread at Wolf saying "hide it, you must be hungry".

The poor fellow, had scary eyes, with a sad face which said "You might still have a chance, but I, I am condemned for sure.". On top of everything, the tragedy of those men to be picked for that work...it could have happened to any strong Jewish prisoner.



Wolf and the others, after unloading the corpses at the crematoria, were practically chased back to the camp to be counted. All the SS, including all the inmates were standing in lines waiting for the four to return. Finally all prisoners were accounted for. After that they were allowed to go to their barracks.

October 1944. The allies on the western front were fighting their way into the Reich. On the east, the Russian Army had occupied East Prussia, pushing hard from the east into Germany.

In any logical mind there was no more doubt that the Germans are losing the war. Why they did not arrange some kind of peace, instead of fighting to the complete destruction of their country, is beyond any logic. But in this war there was no logic. Perhaps they still hoped for the wonder weapon, and then they will show the world. From later documents it was discovered that Hitler said "If the Germans can not win the war, they have no right to exist". From documents found after the war, orders had been given to the Gestapo, and others that before Germany fell into the hands of the occupying armies, crops, factories, and anything of value, should be completely destroyed rather than fall into enemy hands.

Concentration camp Auschwitz was shrinking. Everyday people were shipped to other KZ camps in the Reich, no one was set free. Smaller camps around Auschwitz had already stopped existing. It was not until late November 1944 that Wolf was included into a transport out of Auschwitz. After two days ride in a cattlecar the transport of thousand arrived in the famous concentration camp Oranienburg.

Camp Oranienburg, together with camp Dachau near Munich was one of the first concentration camps in Germany established long before the war. They were mostly used for Germans who did not fall in line with the Nazis. In Oranienburg the discipline toward the inmates was very strict. The fear among the inmates was high to a point that they jumped even before they were told to.

Wolf already knew that all it matters is pushing time, and not be noticed. Once they knew you, they had a way of coming back to you.







In KZ Oranienburg the rumor was that a counterfeit<sup>U</sup>ing printing factory existed, producing American dollars, and British pounds. Certainly no inmate could come near it, unless he was working there. After a few weeks in Oranienburg, where the inmates were hanging around with absolutely no work, and nothing for them to do, again there was talk of evaluation. Since except Germany Europe as almost in allied hands where else could they be shipped to? But the SS had places to send them to. That was the time where KZ prisoners were shipped or marched from one place to another. On those marches many of Jewish prisoners were either killed, or died of hunger and exhaustion. While prisoners from Oranienburg were shipped out, many others were coming in. KZ Oranienburg became packed with inmates of all nationalities. As had earlier occurred in Auschwitz, the condition in Oranienburg became chaotic. It seemed that the Germans did not know what to do with all the accumulated prisoners. But nobody thought of letting them free.

After a few weeks in KZ Oranienburg Wolf and others were shipped to a smaller camp called Liebe Rosa. Two weeks later they were again transferred to another camp. After steady shipping from one place to another, one had lost track of where that particular camp was situated.

It was February 1945. The ring of Allied armies around Germany grew tighter. Over the skies of Germany, the silver shining American planes were everywhere. There was almost no German resistance to the steady Allied bombardments.

The prisoners knew that the Germans were losing the war, and that the Allies were in Germany. Although their hopes were high, nobody knew how close the Allies were to the camp. The Jewish prisoners were optimistic like the others, but the fear of what the Germans might still do to them was also high.

In those smaller camps were no crematoria, but Jewish prisoners were forced on the so called death marches of hundreds of kilometers.



Many of the marchers could not take it, from hunger and lack of water many got swollen feet, and bodies, they either sat down, or fell down not being able to get up. All those were shot on the spot.

Among those killed while on such a death march was Wolf's niece, the oldest daughter of brother Moshe. It happened near the camp for women in Stuthoff, while marching the women to another place, this girl had to do her natural thing. An SS man in front of the others for no reason shot her. (Umgelegt)

The purpose of evacuating the prisoners from one place to another was to get them away from the enclosing Allied armies into parts of Germany where the Nazis were still in control.

The SS behavior toward the Gentile prisoners was definitely changed. No Mistreatment, and almost humane. But not toward the Jews, to the Jews, the same brutal behavior prevailed as before.

As before, among the Jews there was a tense and nervous feeling. Signs that the end of the war is near were many. But how soon? And who would be among the lucky survivors? And how will it happen? Everyone tried to overhear what the Germans were saying to each other. Ears and eyes were open to any news. Some even came close to their radio, although for a prisoner listening to radio was strongly verboten. As ridiculous as it might seem, some of the Germans still believed in the Fuehrer's promise of a wonder weapon.

In KZ Liebe Rosa, the daily known discipline and routine continued, although beatings and maltreatment of the prisoners was not very severe. For the prisoners there was no work, and nothing to do. It seemed very much that the SS had not been advised what to do with the prisoners. But discipline was enforced.

One day Wolf was taken to town, to a German home to move around furniture. For Wolf, it would have been a comical situation if it were not so tragic. A Jewish KZ prisoner with a yellow star on his chest and back, walked thru a German town in between two SS guards holding outstretched rifles ready to shoot. A skinny, hungry and weak man, was watched over like a most dangerous criminal in the world.







What a stupid situation. People in the street looked at him, and Wolf looked back at them, wondering what they were thinking about him. He envied them. They were free to walk the street without guards, that was something he did not have for many years. What a good feeling. Will he ever walk the streets free by himself?

Women looked down to the street from apartment windows. From one window two women spat down at him, screaming "Damn Jew". Wolf was accustomed to that hatred by strangers. It no longer bothered him. Rather he felt sorry for their mindless stupidity.

True, he was born Jewish, but he never, ever did any wrong to anyone. Yes, love is an involvement. But hate, to hate is so easy. From Liebe Rosa, some Jewish prisoners, Wolf among them again were to be evacuated to other camps. For that occasion they were given clean clothes and warm gloves. Wolf thinking of the coming cold winter reached out twice and was given a second pair of gloves. 1945 was a cold winter, he thought that two pair of gloves would be good for his hands. That no one would notice that he had two pair of gloves, he put one glove into the other. Later he paid for his resourcefulness. Having more clothes than were rationed was punishable.

Wolf in a group of about sixty Jews were shipped to a place called Swinemuende, which is a peninsula on the Baltic sea, not far from the city of Stettin. Today it belongs to Poland and is called Swineuiszcie. Swinemuende was about 80% destroyed from Allied bombardments. Presumably that was the same place where the Germans were shooting V1 and later V2 rockets aimed at England.

The group of sixty Jews, Wolf among them, arrived at KZ Swinemuende at night. The reception was the same as in all other concentration camps, but this time not only the SS gave the newcomers the cruel welcome, the prisoners too joined in the beating and pushing. The joy was that these were the first Jewish prisoners in the camp. Camp Swinemuende was different from all other camps Wolf has been in before. It looked more like a working place than a KZ.



Except for the prisoners barracks, and the dwellings for the SS, everything else was destroyed by the Allied bombardments. The working places were all located underground, to which the Jewish prisoners were off limits. The work done underground in factories and shops was very secretive and no Gentile prisoner ever talked about it. Concentration camp Swinemuende was not a killing factory, until the arrival of the sixty Jews the inmates were involved in important work for the Reich. Living conditions were almost good, the barracks were clean, individual iron beds for everyone, with closets for their belongings. The place looked more like a place of work than a concentration camp. The prisoners already there were mostly French and Scandinavian, some Poles. But no Jews, or Russians.

It seemed that relations between the Germans and inmates were very friendly, they even called each other by their names. Since in that camp this group was the first comprised of Jews everybody from the Germans to the other inmates had a ball with them. All pushed the Jews around. Hitting them, beat them, and punishing them in various forms. Toward the new Jewish arrivals everybody tried to outperform their hatred toward them. The French prisoners often used the word "Juif". That kind of hatred from the French was somehow surprising. The French had the reputation of being democratic and liberal people.

Daily, over the camp, Allied planes flew over. During air raids the camp gates were opened so the prisoners could run into the woods for protection. But within 15 minutes after the raid was over they had to be back in the camp. If not, they were shot for attempt to escape. But escape was impossible, there was nowhere to escape to. For miles around the camp the Gestapo with dogs patrolled the whole peninsula. The terrain was a highly secret military installation reaching out well into the Baltic sea.

Except for the Jews, most inmates were working somewhere underground, they went to work in the morning and returned at days end. They never talked about their work, or what they were doing.







The work performed in KZ Swinemuende was secret kept by the German and by the inmate workers. A secret which they kept well.

The Jewish newcomers were busy cleaning up the camp, and other non important work, which was not bad. But to make up for the easiness of work the SS as well as the other inmates enjoyed themselves with the Jews. By intimidation, abuse, beatings, and even killing them, enjoying and having lots of fun, one outdoing the other.

One evening after returning to the barracks after a stressful day a Jewish prisoner complained to the Capo that somebody had stolen his gloves. He asked if it would be possible to get another pair. The man had no intention of creating any problem, he just asked for a pair of gloves. But the Capo, with his sense of justice gathered all inmates from that barracks demanding that whoever took the gloves should voluntarily return them, otherwise a search would be made. They intended to search everyone, and if they found anyone had two pair of gloves, he of course, would be the thief.

Wolf came into the camp with two pair of gloves. He knew that explanations would not help. Nobody would believe him. Well, on search of all the prisoners they found on Wolf two pair of gloves. The punishment was that Wolf with his pants down was to bend over and everybody from that barrack would with a board hit him on his behind. That meant that about 300 men would hit him on that place. It was not the pain Wolf was afraid of, but also he might not be able to endure such a punishment. In a concentration camp, one does not beg or cry. It wouldn't help.

After the ordeal was over, Wolf's behind was black and blue, swollen and aching. It was very painful to sit or to stand. When nobody was looking, he put wet rags on that spot. After a time it became better. The pain subsided.

Days later Wolf came down with a cold, and fever. He registered as sick, he was permitted to stay in the barrack, and not go to work. There were others in the barracks because of illnesses. That day after the inmates left the camp to the assigned work all the sick Jews were ordered into the yard, told to take off all their clothes for (Lause control) search of lice. Whoever was found to have lice would be punished.





It was the month of February 1945, icy winds were blowing from the Baltic sea, about fifteen Jewish inmates were standing naked searching for lice. As expected lice was found on some, and as punishment the guards pulled out big hoses, drawing ice cold water from the sea spraying the unfortunate, washing the lice off.

The powerful spray knocked them off their feet. A few never got up. They just died on the spot, perhaps they died from heart failure? Then Wolf saw a Capo beating a Jewish inmate with an iron pipe, the poor fellow was already bleeding, and the Capo did not stop. Wolf was stunned and seeing that completely froze.

The Capo noticed Wolf's astonishment and immediately turned from the victim to Wolf, with the same pipe hit him over the head and body. Wolf protected his face and head by covering up with his hands. As a result of the beating both his hands swelled up, and developed gangrene. Most of the damage was done to the left arm below the elbow, and on the right hand, his ring finger was broken.

The scars of that incident Wolf would carry forever, a stiff right ring finger, and cut marks on the left hand.

Again severe physical pain, which needed to be taken care by medical help. Worse still, he could not work. With his swollen hands he could not handle any tools. To report his problem was also impossible, Wolf already knew what it meant to be declared sick. In spite of his handicap, pain, and physical difficulties, Wolf daily reported to work.

The Jews working in the same group knew of his problems, they felt sorry for him. They also knew that it could well happen to them. They helped him doing his work as much as they could. Whatever Wolf was not able to do they did for him. Covering for him to the outmost. After about six weeks in KZ Swinemuende, of the sixty Jews who came in only nine have left alive. All the rest have had either been killed, or died of various causes.





Among the Jewish prisoners was a man, a complete stranger to Wolf who noticed what he was going through. The strange man to whom Wolf never had a chance to get acquainted with approached him showing his concern, and offered to help

The man explained that he was not a doctor, nor did he have any knowledge of medicine, just by instinct might know what to do, if Wolf would let him help. There was not much of an alternative, but also no promise. On Wolf's question "what to do?" the man said "We have to cut the wound open at both ends, to force the pus out. Once the pus is out, the swelling and pain will subside and hopefully the wound will heal". To Wolf's question we have no knives, nor bandages, and there is no way we could get some, how and with what would he do an operation? The man answered "for a knife we will sharpen a spoon to an edge the same as a knife. For bandages we will use part of your shirt. We will wash your shirt, it must be clean to avoid another infection. I want to help you, but you must decide".

There was not much of a choice. Something must be done. The swelling, and the infection will not go away by itself. The opposite, it was getting worse. They decided that coming Sunday will be the proper time to do it. On Sunday afternoon the camp was resting. The prisoners got off. Wolf, with his swollen arm, and swollen finger was not able to wash his shirt, nor sharpen the spoon. The man did all for him.

The spoon became sharp, though not as sharp as a knife. And Wolf's shirt was washed in the latrine with soup, and the bottom part was ripped off to be used for bandages. Ready for surgery.

The following Sunday afternoon the good man and Wolf found a secluded place where they would not be seen by anybody. Most of all by the guards. (Like anything else, even helping yourself was verboten). The man with the determination of a doctor took the spoon knife and on the left arm, where it was most swollen, made two parallel cuts. A burst of pus came running out. The pain from the incision was severe, but of no importance.



They let the pus flow as much as possible. Then they squeezed it for more pus to come, until blood started showing, than put cloth in form of a bandage over it. The same procedure was followed with the finger, squeezing out the pus. During the next week, the man like a God send angel daily attended to Wolf's wounds. They did not let the wound close, they kept the wound open, cleaning and squeezing out from whatever ps was still in it, by putting a piece of cloth into one side of the opening and out the other, pulling the cloth back and forth, until blood showed. After a time while cleaning the wound no more pus came out, only blood, that was a sign that all the pus was gone. The swelling on the arm and finger completely subsided. The man decided that it's time to let it heal. For a time Wolf kept his arm, and finger in bandaged cloth. It took many weeks until the wounds were completely healed. But the right ring finger remained stiff, and the scars remained permanently.

How does one thank a stranger whose name he never found out and who in such a time and place risks his life to help a fellow man in distress. Wolf to show his appreciation had nothing to reward him with. But the man did not expect a reward, he would have done it for anybody. He went his way, never talked about it.

After about six weeks in KZ Swinemuende of the sixty Jews who came in only nine have left alive. All the rest had either been killed, or died of various causes.





## Chapter XXI

### Poland Liberated

February 1945. After liberating Poland and Pomerania the Russian army crossed into the former border of the Reich, closer to the city of Stettin and the Peninsula Swinemuende. Air raids in the vicinity of the camp were quite frequent. Evidently the Allies knew their targets, no bombs fell into the camp. Watching the Germans, it was hard to figure them out. No fear, nor desperation. They did their work as normal as always.

For the Jewish prisoners, it was suffering as usual, with the same brutality and hatred toward them. But quietly there was a feeling of optimism. Hopefully after all the sufferings maybe there is a chance of survival. Lingered by the knowledge that to the last minute something ugly could happen. The optimist without hope.

March 1945. In camp Swinemuende there was talk about evacuation of the Jewish prisoners only. Why the Jews only? Are there any special plans for the Jews? Will the others be freed? Any time the Germans had special plans for Jews it was scary. Evacuation of the few Jews came about. It was easy, only nine Jews. The rest were left behind forever. The reason for evacuation was the same as before. The Russians came too close for comfort. Also the rocket factories had to be destroyed before the enemy took over, and the gentile inmates could be of help, but not the Jews. The Jews were not trusted.



This time evacuation was to a nearby camp called Barth. Camp Barth was about 20 kilometers from Swinemuende, on the mainland, in the district Stetin. Anyway, everything was very chaotic. One noticed that even the SS guards were confused, they did not know what will happen to them, nor the prisoners they were guarding.

KZ Barth was loaded with prisoners, there was absolutely no room for more. People were all over, occupying every inch of floor. The prisoners were wandering around, with nothing to do. The little food given was handed out at various times of day or night. To keep the prisoners occupied, twice a day they ordered lice control, which meant that thousands of people taking off their clothes and searching for lice, killing the found lice between the nails of the two thumb fingers.

It was a like a sport that the spit came into ones mouth. The prisoners had lice a plenty. When so many people were in close physical contact, with almost no washing facilities, lice were a certainty. People had pleasure in putting the two thumbs together and crush the lice to death. This time nobody was punished for having lice, maybe the Germans had lice also. For lice they make distinction between the master, and the slave, certainly race makes no difference.

I don't know whom the Russians were tailing, us or the Germans. Anyway, shooting and bombardments were heard nearby, very close to Camp Barth. Apparently, the SS did not have an order from Berlin what about to do with the prisoners. As for the Jews, they were the property of the Gestapo, and only the Gestapo would decide their fate.

Since most of the crematoria were located in the east, and that part of Europe was taken over by the Russians, there were no more places to kill Jews a mass. As for shooting them, well, they did that on the so called dead marches. While marching Jews from camp to camp. Lining the roads with Jewish corpses.





It seemed that the biggest problem to the Germans was, what to do with the Jewish prisoners. The Russians were overrunning one camp after another. As the Germans were running from the Russians, for the safety of the Jews, they were dragging them along. Somehow it never occurred to the masters that they could set them free, as they had already done with the gentile prisoners.

End of March 1945. Liberation was near, yet still so very far. The Jewish prisoners never knew exactly what was happening around them, one had to overhear words from between the Germans. But it seems that the German guards did not know either. There were many unsubstantiated rumors which later proved to be false.

Pomerania fell to the Russians. Camp Barth was being evacuated. the inmates were loaded into box cars, with about 120 people to a wagon. Inside of the wagon was organized in a way that in the middle were reserved for the guards. This was about one third of the car was taken by five guards. the other two thirds, at both ends of the car were for the prisoners.

The prisoners sat on the floor cramped into stretched and separated legs, fitting snugly in between another's legs. If one leaned aside, he leaned against somebody else, who was too weak to bear the weight, so he again leaned against the next man, who leaned against the next.

Among the prisoners the physical strain was intolerable, and hostilities among the prisoners broke out. A man can not for hours just sit straight without moving or stretching. The prisoners were cramped and extremely close to each other, one's breath was felt by the other. Everybody was in pain. It caused quarrels and disagreements.

The guards, to enforce order, were hitting everybody they could reach, knowing well the cause of the disorder. The train was heading toward the north of Germany. On the tracks were many trains with prisoners passing each other.



Often the prisoner trains stopped on side tracks to let army trains pass by. During air raids, all trains stopped, till the raids were over. Often Allied planes flew over, and on one occasion they machine gunned the prisoner trains, inflicting casualties. Assuming that the pilots were not aware of the trains cargo. Sometimes for hours the train did not stop, not given the prisoners a chance to relieve themselves. Many could not hold it, and did it in their pants, resulting in the car a urine smell. That got the German guards mad as hell "Those dirty Jews. Who ever heard of grown up men pissing in their pants?"

The food ration for the day, consisted of water, available only on the unpredicted train stops, and one loaf of bread for six men. A loaf of bread consisted of one kilogram, which is a little more than two pounds. That was the whole nourishment for 24 hours, and longer because the bread was often given at various times.

When the bread was distributed, usually a group of six got together and divided it usually using a spoon for a knife, measuring the loaf from all sides to equalize the slices. While one cut the bread, the rest held their hand underneath it so not a crumb would get lost. In the dark somebody tried to grab the bread. The man dividing the bread did not let loose, instead of putting the spoon knife into the bread, stuck the knife into the unknown hand, of the unseen thief. The thief let out a scream of pain, but did not get the bread. Later they noticed the thief with a bleeding hand. It was a Pole, who had eaten his bread and had an appetite for more.

The train with the prisoners was running toward northern Germany. On the occasional stops one could see many people in KZ uniforms freely walking along the roads. Of the question "How come they goet free?" They answered, that the war was about over. The Germans let them free. Because no transportation at that time existed in Germany, they were walking home to their countries. According to their knowledge, no Jews were let free.







For the Jewish prisoners it was a scary and depressing news. While the good news was that the war for the world is about over. Prisoners from concentration camps were set free, they the Jews were still dragged across Germany, under the same conditions as before. Apparently the Germans still had plans for the Jews.

Among the guards there was an older German who behaved more humane than the others. Wolf pushed himself closer to that man in order to hear what the guards were talking to each other about. When the opportunity arose Wolf asked the older German what he thought would happen to the people in this transport. The German understood that Wolf meant the Jews of the transport. He calmly responded that the train was bound for the famous KZ Bergen-Belsen, near the city of Hanover. He also said, that their order was to deliver this transport to camp Bergen-Belsen, that's all. What would happen to the prisoners (Jews) afterwards? The German did not know, but added, it looks as though the war would not last much longer. One should not lose hope.



April 1945. Concentration Camp Bergen-Belsen

In the first week of April 1945 Wolf's prisoner transport arrived at the famous concentration camp Bergen-Belsen, earlier the camp was a place for male and female prisoners alike. When Wolf's transport arrived, Bergen-Belsen had male prisoners only, mostly Jews.

The rumor was that typhoid had struck the camp, and for some reason all the female prisoners, including Jewish, under a deal by the Swedish Red Cross, had been evacuated to Sweden. It was unbelievable that Jews had been set free by the Nazis. For the rest of the living Jews, it was taken as a good sign.

Concentration camp Bergen-Belsen was as chaotic as could be. All the gentile prisoners had been freed. All women prisoners, including Jewish, were evacuated. Those remaining were exclusively Jewish male prisoners. The camp was very crowded, and still more Jewish male prisoners were coming in.

Looking at all those Jewish transports coming into Bergen-Belsen one was surprised to see that despite the killing of Jews the last 5 1/2 years other Jews besides themselves were still alive.

In KZ Bergen-Belsen, in the mind of every Jew was, what were the intentions of the Germans in concentrating so many Jews, at that particular time in one place? The crematoria in Bergen-Belsen was no more in operation.





It was estimated that about 30,000 Jews were gathered in Bergen-Belsen. Although bombardments, shooting, etc., was heard in the camp, yet nobody really was aware how close they were to liberation. All kinds of stories and rumors were current, but nobody really knew the truth. Life was still very difficult. The SS tried to enforce discipline. Many were dying from hunger, and more were just hanging on, weak to a point that they could not stand on their feet. Realizing that they might not live to be liberated.

The German guards behaved as usual. No indication that outside the Allies are about at the camps gates, and the Fatherland is collapsing. The rations were still distributed irregularly, most of the time there was not enough bread for everyone, when it came to the weak ones who could not stand in line, most of the time there was no more rations for them. Daily more of them were dying. The still stronger ones, from the little food they got became weaker. It was a cycle where the stronger became weak, the weak died.

Compared to others, Wolf was lucky. He found himself a spot and a bunk, which he did not dare to leave, else someone else should claim it. He like all the others suffered from hunger. He was so very skinny, and weak, that he could not stand on his feet.

Outside the camp the sounds of battle were very close to the camp. One could see fire from shooting, and explosions. The German guards did not disclose who was fighting with whom. Were the Germans fighting the British, Americans, or the Russians?



Liberation-April 15, 1945 3PM

The inmates in KZ Bergen-Belsen were in a condition of starvation. They were fighting to hold on for another day, maybe tomorrow will be the lucky day, and they will survive? They were too weak to pay attention to the shooting and fighting outside the camp. They did not realize that liberation was at hand. Many died at the last minute.

April 15th, 1945 at 3 PM the British liberated the prisoners from concentration camp Bergen-Belsen. The British army with tanks, trucks, and various weapons came from all sides and occupied camp Bergen-Belsen. In no time the British were within the camp, surrounding and arresting the SS guards. It was said that some of the SS managed to escape.

The British found camp Bergen-Belsen in a very dismal condition. The majority of the liberated inmates were Jewish, and in terrible physical condition. They found them lying in bunks, floors, and hallways, unable to move, or standing up. The British did anything they could to help, but clearly did not realize the condition of the survivors. They thought that immediate better nourishment alone would enable the weak and the sick to regain their strength, and health. But it did not work out that way.





The new feeding rations started with breakfast of 250 gram of bread and a quarter pound of margarine. The survivors were not used to the high amount of fat. Dysentery and diarrhea developed among many of the survivors, many were so weak they were unable to make it to the toilet. Human feces were everywhere, and the odor was unbearable. Soon many were dying from dysentery and diarrhea. Ironically, that occurred after they had survived the sufferings of past years, all that in vain.

The British, realizing that these are not normal hungry people, that the people were not used to so much food, especially fat, abruptly changed the ration by taking most of the food away. Again people were hungry, and some again were starving. While in the American zone, the approach to the survivors was done more medically. Gradually feeding and medical help where needed.

The survivors were fighting their last battle for their lives, many could not make it. But the majority of survivors pulled even that danger thru. Among them was Wolf. Wolf the deep down optimist. The realist, the pessimist. The dreamer for survival. But logically, no hope.

Why did Wolf survive? Was he a good person? Did he deserve to survive more than anybody else from his family? Definitely not. Did he do anything special for his survival. No. God could not love him more than pious religious good people. Well? Hitlers final solution aimed at total destruction of the Jews was finally halted, and not too soon. The European Jewry was decimated. Six million. It does not matter that some being ashamed try to deny it. History will testify to the facts, from now and ever. It seems that to hate is easy. While to love, love means to be involved.



The liberated prisoners with the help of special emissaries from their governments were organized according to their nationalities. Jews included, for the purpose to be repatriated. For those from the Western countries, it took only a few days and they were gone. The former prisoners from the Eastern countries, especially where the Russians occupied, people hesitated repatriation.

One heard of force being used, even kidnaping their citizens to return. But not for the Jews. The liberated Jews from Eastern and socialist countries were never forced to return to their former countries. It was like an understanding that on the ashes of their once existence there was no future for Jews. Especially in Poland.

The camp Bergen-Belsen was liberated. But for the Jews there was no place to go. Return to their former eastern Europe countries was out of question. Palestine was put off limits by the British. Other countries refused to take them in.

They became displaced persons. D.P. People with no country and no identification papers, or passports. The British surrounded Bergen-Belsen and locked it. Nobody was permitted to leave the camp, and nobody could come in, no explanation was offered. Although the treatment from the new guards was correct, yet they were prisoners again.

Perhaps they were afraid that once the Jews outside might seek revenge for what the Germans did to them and their families. The dissatisfaction toward the British by the former KZ prisoners became stormy. Demonstrations and the cry for freedom was the tone of the day, finally after two weeks of imprisonment by the British the order was lifted, and the Displaced Persons were free to come and go.

The captured SS guards were by the British put to work, cleaning from inside the camp the accumulated filth, and burying the dead corpses which lay about.





Germany, end of April 1945. For the northern part of Germany the war was over. But in some areas the fighting was still going on. Bergen-Belsen, after two weeks under guards by the British, the former concentration camp Bergen-Belsen was dissolved, the people were moved to a nearby located camp in the town of Celle, in the district of Hanover.

Once all the people were transferred to the camp in Celle the British handed the camp and the people over to the civilian United Nation body called UNNRA. The international organization for displaced persons and refugees. UNNRA later was in charge of all DP camps, and survivors who couldn't or wouldn't for various reasons return to their countries of origin.

The special established so called DP camps by UNNRA. And there were many in Germany, Austria, and Italy, took care of the survivors by feeding, clothing and sheltering them. With no exception of race, color or religion. The former Nazi inmates were registered according to their former nationalities, and given identification cards with pictures. On individual wish, a DP (Displaced Person) could declare him or herself stateless. Which meant that a new home had to be found for. But no one was told where to go, or what to do. They were free to stay in the DP camp, or leave and find private individual accomodation.

For the Jewish survivors, from the Eastern part of Europe returning to the places of their origin was out of the question. After all they went thru for the almost six years, they could not possibly return to countries where antisemitism, hatred, and pogrom attitude against Jews was still very much in existence.

As a matter in point. In June 1945, in the Polish city of Kielce the Poles made a pogrom on the few returned Jews, where many were killed. For Jews from western Europe, that problem did no exist. Most Jews from western Europe returned to their countries together with their gentile compatriots.



The western world realized that the stateless and displaced Jews from eastern Europe, countries and new places must be found for them to settle, and opportunities for a new beginning.

Of course, there was a place waiting for those unfortunate people, that place was Palestine, where the Jewish inhabitants were waiting to take them in, and ready to share their bread with them. But unfortunately, the British rulers of Palestine had other ideas. This time it was not the Germans, but the noble British who were stopping the homeless Jews from reaching their only place they could call home. By arresting them and again putting them behind barbed wires on the island of Cyprus.

In DP Camp Celle, the UNNRRA administrators tried to humanize the former KZ inmates by changing their appearance. They found German military depots with various military uniforms, mostly from the Luftwaffe. They decided to exchange the old concentration camp stripes to rather a clean and new German military uniform. Wolf was lucky, he was given a new uniform from the Luftwaffe. Suddenly, you had a displaced camp looking like a German military camp. The other logic was that, while the former prisoners mingling with the inhabitants of the town was better not to be recognized. Wolf, dressed in a German Luftwaffe uniform suddenly was not recognized as Jude (Jew) he often was mistaken by many Germans for a countryman who just returned from the war. He was stopped in the street and asked to what military unit he belonged, and perhaps knows about a relative. Funny, suddenly the German did not recognize a Jew from an aryan. But Wolf told them about their mistake, that he was not a German, he was a DP in a German uniform, they left without another word.

End of April 1945. Beginning of May 1945. For west and north Germany the second world war was over. But not so for the east. Somehow pockets of German army was still holding out, and postponing the inevitable.







For Wolf, hanging around in a DP camp was a waste of time, and made no sense. It was time to start a new life, and again become a normal person. But first of all he must search, and find out if anybody else from his family beside him had survived that bloody war. The task was not an easy one. There were many places to go to, and public transportation did not exist. It was completely destroyed. The only cars and trucks on the roads were Allied military. Also, Wolf dressed in a German Air Force uniform, no money, and only one additional set of underwear.

Wolf and three others got together to wander from Hanover east toward Berlin and the Russian occupied part of Germany. Mostly walking, but sometimes getting a ride on a British military truck. It took them ten days to reach the city of Magdeburg, on the river Elbe. Right in time when the British evacuated the city handing Magdeburg over to the Russians.

From Magdeburg they walked to the famous city of German kings Potsdam, continuing toward Berlin. Starting with the city of Magdeburg the eastern part of Europe belonged to the Russian empire. None of the so called Allies were in sight, as if the Russians were the only ones fighting Germany. In Berlin Wolf and his comrades parted. Each one with the same purpose of finding a still living relative, went in different directions. Not like in the west, in the Russian zone transportation was no longer a problem. After occupying that part of Germany the Russians had quickly repaired and established the railroad, linking it to the Russian railroad system by widening the rails, and simultaneously cutting it off from connection with the western railroad system.

Wolf in search <sup>of</sup> family and relative survivors, visited offices of UNNRA, Red Cross, and newly established Jewish committees leaving search notes, and addresses where and how to get in touch.



Reaching again after over five years the city of Lodz he found his brother David, who was taken from the Ghetto to Auschwitz and then to a camp in Czechoslovakia, where he was liberated by the Russians. Later Wolf also located a niece, the daughter of brother Moshe. In DP camp Landsberg, West Germany. She was the only survivor of her whole family.

A few other cousins showed up in later months, in various places of Europe. That was all left of many relatives who before the war numbered in the hundreds. In searching for survivors, Wolf wandered thru Germany, and part of Europe. Seeing the tremendous destruction of so many cities, and the death of so many millions of innocent, and even the guilty people, it was almost impossible to believe that twelve short years of the Nazi regime in Germany could do so much damage to the world, and to Germany itself.

A person who lived through years of tremendous persecution, and unheard physical abuse, and still survived was lucky to sustain his normal mental capacity, could not help, but think and question. What really happened in Germany, and to the Germans.

The Nazis came to power not by revolution , but by the ballots of a democratic election. The system existed twelve short years. From 1933 till May 1945. In a country, and a people considered by the world as highly cultured and humane. A people who claimed to be the pinnacle of civilisation. A people from whom such a bloody behavior was least expected. Yet, those were the people who glorified and elected a man as their leader who was not even born a German. The overwhelming majority of Germans were willing to die for the Fuehrer first, and for the Fatherland next.





The German writer Sebastian Haeffner in his book writes quote "Im Endstadium des Zweiten Weltkrieges richtete sich die Mordlust des Diktators gegen das eigene Volk."

In translation At the end of World War two, the lust the dictators was directed toward his own people. Continue quote "Schon in 1941 hatte er (Hitler) erklart. Wen das Deutsche Volk einmal nicht mehr stark und opferbereit ist sein Blut fuer seine Existenz einzusetzen, soll es vergehen, und von einer anderen staerkeren Macht vernichtet werden. Ich (Hitler) werde den deutschen Volk keine Traene nachweinen.

Which translated means, quote, already in 1941 Hitler had stated. When the Germans are no longer strong and prepared to shed its blood for its existence, it shall perish, and be destroyed by another might. I (Hitler) will not shed a tear for the German people.

In another chapter of his book Mr. Haeffner writes, quote, Und schlieslich befahl er (Hitler) die Grundlagen, die das deutsche Volk sollte dafuer buessen, dass es nicht mehr stark genug war"

In translation, quote, He (Hitler) ordered the destruction of the fundamentals which the German people need for the most primitive continuance of its existence. The German people as a whole should atone for not being strong enough. End of quote.

THE END

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